

THE MAGYAR

ALEXANDER IRVINE



THE MAGYAR

A Story of the Social Revolution

BY
ALEXANDER IRVINE



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DEDICATION

“I am convinced that the ideas of humanity and civilization would be better served if the torch were applied to every jail in Alabama. It would be more humane and far better to stake the prisoner out with a ring around his neck like a wild animal than to confine him in places we call jails that are reeking with filth and disease and alive with vermin of all kinds. They are not only harbingers of disease, *but they are unquestionably nurseries of death.*

“If the State of Alabama wishes to kill its convicts it should do it directly—not indirectly.”

DR. SHIRLEY BRAGG,

President of the Convict Board of the State of Alabama,
1906.

To my brothers and sisters—white and black—in the stockades and other hells of Alabama, hundreds of whom I have seen in this slow inhuman process of murder, I dedicate this book.

ALEXANDER IRVINE.

Happy Hollow Farm,
Peekskill, N. Y.,
April, 1911.

THE MAGYAR

A STORY OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

A HOUSE DIVIDED

"My dear," said the minister's wife, "you are perfectly welcome to your nearness to the heart of the great unwashed—but I want something more sanitary!"

"No one ever accused you, dear," he retorted, "of any hankering in that direction—and if I am welcome to it, why this fuss every time we talk about it?"

"I have no objection to your preaching to them," she said, "but to bring them here as your guests is a little more than a refined taste can stand."

"Are they offensive?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied sharply, "very offensive!"

He smiled as he spread over his knees the evening paper.

"It isn't so much what occurs here," she continued, "as what it leads to; they invite you to all sorts of disagreeable mass meetings and protest gatherings—and you attend them all!"

"You don't object to a Chamber of Commerce feed where we wear our finery, my dear; and if my conscience—"

"Oh, yes," she said, interrupting him, "there goes your conscience again. I, too, have a conscience; but I see to it that it doesn't rob my children of food, clothing and an education!"

"We might differ, also, on what constitutes an education," he suggested.

"Yes—we undoubtedly might—as we do on all other things; but—"

"Well, let us not go over it again—"

"I have one request to make," she said seriously. "I hope you will not be stubborn, but grant it: you will not get mixed up in that affair at the City Hall, will you?"

"Our annual church meeting occurs the same night, and my first duty is there, of course; but if we finish our business in reasonable time, I shall have to accept the challenge of the labor men."

"A challenge?"

"Yes.—To you it's an invitation; but to me—a challenge! Goodman sent the circular and penciled a postscript: 'Shall we have one minister out of fifty?'"

Stephen Ruden and his wife were having their usual heart to heart talk after the retirement of their three children. He was forty, of strong athletic build, and handsome. His wife was the daughter of a New York business man. She was thirty-five and considered beautiful. She had tasted some of the pleasures of society, but, as the wife of a clergyman who had little taste for such things, she found it increasingly difficult to satisfy her social ambitions. They had been married ten years and had three children—two girls and a boy. They had occupied the parsonage of the Fairport Church in a suburb of New Oxford, Connecticut, for five years. He was popular, but considered an impractical dreamer by the business men who were his most intimate friends. He was something of a prophet, a good deal of a scholar, but very little of a pastor.

Mrs. Ruden saw the trend of the conversation—it

had gone that way so often. She tried a more conciliatory method.

"Stephen, dear," she said, looking into his hazel eyes, "are we forever to run atilt to the thinking of the best people?"

A low chuckle in reply annoyed her.

"Sweetheart," he said a moment later, "your best people do not think—they run atilt of those who do."

"Do your labor men think?"

"Not over much."

"Who, then?"

"A few who can afford it."

"Yes—" she said sarcastically, "a few—and you are one of them; a privileged few whose wives and children pay the price with starved and naked bodies."

"Madeline, dear, don't get excited. Let us talk without irritation. Whom do you mean by 'the best people?' The Sloans, the Withertons? They are the moneyed people. 'Best' means character and intelligence. Most of your mushroom aristocracy have neither. Is there a man or woman in that crowd that ever read a good book? Their intellects are of the cash register variety, and as for religion—my dear, I don't want to be unfair—but you know deep down in your heart that they don't know what it is!"

"That is a fine comment on your five years' preaching, isn't it?"

"It may be and it may not—you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

"Why do you stay then?"

"The answer is simple. I give them what they want—a literary discourse on Sunday morning delivered with some degree of dignity and the ordinary trimmings, and I am at liberty to preach to what we are

pleased to call 'the masses' in the evening, and go where I am needed the rest of the week."

"Stephen, I know you get a crowd; but what do you give them? Literary criticism, ethical culture, and moral discourses! Do you call that 'the gospel?'"

"We won't discuss that, my dear. I know you think I have lost my faith—but I have only sloughed off some superstitions that befog the soul."

"And have acquired a few opinions that beggar your family and keep your friends apologizing for you every time they go into society!"

"This embarrassment of my friends is new—I have not heard of it before."

"Why, at the Chesters the other night, Mr. Chester said he believed you were drifting into Socialism!"

"Poor Chester!"

"Poor Chester—indeed! He stands for something in the community."

"What, for instance?"

"He is President of the Chamber of Commerce!"

"I know he is. And he lives in a sixty thousand dollar house, owns a fifteen thousand dollar automobile, has his name in the Connecticut Blue Book; but a man may have all these things and only a thirty cent soul with which to enjoy them!"

"It seems to me that a minister who characterizes his parishioners as 'thirty-cent souls' needs to restudy his Bible."

"My dear, I haven't so characterized them. I have in my parish some of the finest souls in the world. There's the widow Ellsworth on the hill, as worthy of a biography as Florence Nightingale. There's old Mrs. Lines whose hands are like the claws of an eagle from opening oysters. Much less holy women have

been canonized. There's the cripple Barnet who runs the peanut stand at the bridge. He's a saint of God. I could name a score of such—all of them profoundly religious, but afraid to open their mouths in church matters because they can't show up big at the annual pew auction. On Sundays they sit under the gallery, out of sight."

"Stephen, I am so tired of hearing you talk of that pew auction every time we mention church matters. Why don't you preach against it or find a parish where there is no such thing?"

"I have preached against it; but it's the one chance in the year for Waddell to palm off his stale jokes, and for the Chesters, Sloans and Withertons to outbid each other for the choice lots in the house of God."

Mrs. Ruden was irritated. She had heard all this before.

"I don't care what you say to the contrary," she almost screamed, "I want to be among people who succeed—people who are dominant. There is a fundamental lack in these anaemic saints of yours!" She arose and went toward the door—hesitated for a moment with the knob in her hand. Her face was flushed, and her lips trembled. She had a final word with a keen edge with which she desired in her passion to end the controversy.

"Say it, my dear; it will relieve your tension," he said quietly, as he watched her.

"Stephen—" she said, "blood tells! You have in your veins the blood of the foreign proletariat—and with all your learning and exquisite manners, you can't quite hide the fact that you are different—that in your veins flows the blood of a strange race!"

Ruden slept in his library. They had forgotten to

arrange his couch. He arranged it himself, and prepared to retire. This combination of library study and bedroom was small, and every available inch of space was covered with books and pictures. The largest picture in the room was a copy of a painting—the work of a Norwegian. It was a group—Jesus, in the garb of a mechanic with a square paper hat on his head, stands talking by the wayside to a couple of laborers. A priest is passing, and as he passes, he looks over his shoulder at Jesus. There is contempt and a sneer on the priest's face. The minister stood before it in deep contemplation.

“He was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!” he muttered as his eyes filled with tears. Then he stole quietly to his wife's room. She was lying on a sofa, pressing a handkerchief to her eyes. He knelt, bent over and kissed her lips, muttering softly in a trembling voice—“Peace troubled soul—peace of God to you!” He retreated as softly as he had entered.

“Stephen!” she called, as he reached the door, “Stephen!”

He returned, sat down on the edge of the sofa.

“There is a mystery about you,” she said, “and I have not been able to solve it in twelve years!”

“The mystery deepens every time I find it impossible to agree with you, doesn't it?” he asked.

“That is your usual subtle way of driving me back upon myself; nevertheless there is an orientalism about you that you seem unable or unwilling to explain satisfactorily.”

“My dear,” he said, “what's the use of arguing? You are tired, and it's late. Let's be content with the battle as it ended in my den.”

"What is your conception of life, anyway?" she asked, in a calmer manner.

"It's a different thing to different people, dear. It's a blessing to some, and a curse to others. To one man it's a mission; to another, a joke; to a third, a problem, and to a fourth, the mere struggle of the beast to exist."

"What is it to *you*, Stephen?"

"I hardly know, dear,—a journey, perhaps. The road is at times rough—then smooth. I have four traveling companions—you and the children. There is work to do as we go along; burdens to be borne for the heavy laden, joys and sorrows to be shared with pilgrims we meet on the way. Sometimes the sky overhead is blue and sunshine floods the road; sometimes heavy clouds hang low and cast deep shadows. Parts of the road are besprinkled with flowers, and others with thorns that annoy—and sharp stones that cut the weary feet of the travelers."

"And the destination?"

"Ah, yes,—the destination—the theologians put all the emphasis there and have neglected the road. When I first met you, I was doing that myself, and much of our lack of harmony is due to the fact that I have abandoned speculation about future heavens and hells peopled with gods and demons!"

"And what have you left?"

"I have the road!"

"Stephen, you tire me so with your parables and dreams. I wish you would get down to earth and be practical. What on earth do you mean by 'the road'?"

"Life, my dear,—the common life!"

"I don't like to have you use that word 'common' every time you speak."

"I know, dear; with others you have the itch to be uncommon—to possess what others cannot possess, to do what others cannot do. That is why you so stoutly defended Mrs. Bowen when she donated a set of silver individual communion cups so that she wouldn't have to take the symbol of the blood of Christ from the same cup as her neighbors who were ditchers, diggers and oyster-openers!"

Mrs. Ruden arose like a flash, and cried, "Stephen, how can you say what you know is not true? It was because she had to drink after old Deacon T—— who comes to every service with tobacco in his mouth!"

"Don't get excited, please. Sit down, and I will tell you what I understand by 'the road.'"

"Oh—it's hopeless—it's hopeless! I can't stand it!" She stretched herself again on the sofa, and sobbed.

"I sympathize with Mrs. Bowen on the tobacco question," he said, "but I have my own version from her. Anyway, that's unimportant. Let me talk to you quietly a few minutes, and then we will retire."

"No, I don't want to hear your platitudes about the sufferings of your common people. I'm tired of it. Talk to me of success—not failure; of beauty—not ugliness; of intelligence—not stupidity!"

"No, dear, I'll go to my den, beaten; you have the last word, anyway,—that's something."

CHAPTER II

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES

"STEPHEN," said Mrs. Ruden in a joocular vein a few days before the annual parade of church statistics to be held May 1st, 1905, "I'm going to play politics myself at the annual meeting."

"Good!" he said, "will you let me in on the plot?"

"How can I when you are the subject of it?"

"I'll meet you half way, Madeline,—I'll give you my plan of campaign if you will give me yours. How's that?"

"You'll play fair, Stephen?"

"My dear—"

"Hush!"—she put her hand playfully over his mouth—"of course, you will!"

"Well, since it's your play, what's your trump card, Madeline?"

"First—a bean supper at the church—it won't be ready on time. The meeting will open with prayer—Deacon Thurston will pray whether you ask him or not. I'll report for the Ladies' Guild—my report takes half an hour to read; then, I'll make a few remarks. The meeting at the City Hall closes at ten—and it takes twenty-five minutes to get there—so!"

"So—" he repeated, smiling, "that's your plot, is it?"

"Yes—now for yours."

"Mine's more simple: let things take their natural

course, or, even take your unnatural and political course; and, as I said before, if we finish in time—to take the car to City Hall.”

“But if you can’t get there before ten what’s the use of starting?”

“Look here, Madeline, I’ll make a simpler compact with you: if the chairman of the standing committee, the treasurer or the secretary are at the church meeting, I will give it up and come home with you! If they are absent, you will not object to my going, will you?”

“Are they to be at the City Hall?”

“I think so.”

“To watch you?”

“No—to watch their financial interests!”

“Impossible!”

“Do you agree to the compact?”

“Are they stockholders?”

“All of them; and if they have time only for one meeting, why shouldn’t I take time for both?”

“Then I’ll call off the bean supper,” she said slowly.

“And Deacon Thurston’s prayer also?”

“I suppose so.”

“Don’t! Call off the prayer—let the bean festival go on. It’s the only healthy normal thing in the line of church festivals.”

“Stephen!”

“I mean it. Everybody is at home around a bean-pot. They smile and converse freely and relax and unlimber. There’s a democratic atmosphere around an ecclesiastical bean-fest that I find nowhere else. At other festivals they assume sainthood; they sit like gravestones and envelope themselves with outward and

visible signs that are out of touch and keeping with an inward natural life."

"You are diverting my attention, Stephen. I dread your appearance at that City Hall meeting. I am worrying myself ill over it."

"Let us agree, then, that if the principal officers of the church are not at the annual meeting that you will offer no objection to my attending the latter part of it."

"Well, I suppose that is all there is left for me to do."

The minister attended the meeting and made a speech.

Next morning, in a little stove store near the Fairport church, a group of churchmen met and talked the situation over. A few nights later the minister had a call from a lawyer who represented the discontented.

"Of course, I come as your personal friend," he said, by way of introduction.

"Yes," Stephen said, "I know—go on."

"They are hot!" he said.

"Who?"

"You know—these men of means."

"I don't know—name them."

He named the men who had been at the City Hall meeting, and told of their deliberations in the stove store.

"So they think I am a Socialist, do they?"

"They have no doubt of it now; and, as your friend, I want to clear the matter up."

"I don't know what Socialism is," said the minister. "I have never read a book on it—none of my friends are Socialists; but if what I said at the City Hall is Socialism, I plead guilty."

A week later Dr. Bacon was called to the parsonage to attend the minister in one of his monthly attacks of chills and fever; for ten hours he had been in its grip. The only rest of the day came about six o'clock.

Husband and wife in the twilight were talking over the effects of the public hearing, when Ned Carolan was announced. Ned was the Diogenes of New Oxford, and had come to congratulate the parson on his public spirit—the second time Carolan was ever known to do such a thing.

“The doctor has given positive orders,” said Mrs. Ruden to Ned, “that Mr. Ruden is to be on no account disturbed.”

“Will ye do something for me, madam?”

“With pleasure,” said the minister’s wife, in her most pleasant vein.

“Tell the doctor to go to ——”

“Mr. Carolan!”

“Yes, that’s me. Tell him *I* said it!”

Mrs. Ruden was about to shut the door when Ned planted his number ten inside. “No you don’t!” he said. “I want to see Ruden an’ ye can bet yer old shoes I’m a-goin’ t’ do it—see?” He clamped upstairs purposely making a noise and shouting, as he ascended —“Ruden! where are ye?”

“Come in, Ned,” said the minister.

Ned looked at him. “Ye look as if ye’d swallowed a butcher’s knife—siek at the gizzard, eh?”

“I’ve been shaking the house to its foundations, Ned; but I’m getting over it now.”

“Never mind the house,” said the visitor. “Shake up these mealy-mouthed suckers in yer church!”

Ruden laughed.

“See here, Ruden,” he said, “I’ll be gettin’ th’ toe of yer ol’ woman’s boot in a minute. She’s sputterin’ like a wet hen—so what I’ve got t’ say, I’ll say hot off th’ bat. These holy water company men in yer church will boot ye out in a few weeks, an’ I want t’ give ye a

tip. I've got a contract for a sewer, an' I'll give ye a job at a dollar an' two bits a day. Ye've swung a pick?"

"Yes."

"Good! it's a—sight better job than spoutin' for a livin' among these daylight robbers of Fairport. I know 'em—they're oysters—that's what they are—and they've ate so many of their kind that their busums heave an' swell wi' th' tide! Good night!"

A minute later there was a noise like the report of a blast of dynamite—Ned had shut the door—and was gone. Madeline, pale with rage, entered.

"Is your friend, Mr. Carolan, a walking delegate?" she asked, in a tone of bitter irony.

"No," Stephen said, laughing, "he's a walking dynamo!"

"Stephen, it sent a cold chill through me to see a glow on your face while that uncouth man was talking to you! If Mr. Sloan had called you would have shut your eyes and feigned sleep."

"There is a difference."

"I should say there is. It's a pity a few of our lady friends were not here to entertain Mr. Carolan."

"No, dear, ladies are not in Ned's line. He's a priest—a social priest—and is the agent of God to watch the gang of rascals that misgovern New Oxford. They throw him out of the door and he clambers in through the window; they shut the committee-room door, and he plants himself on the skylight!"

"It's too bad that one of your deacons or one of your prominent church members couldn't so distinguish himself."

"It is, dear," he said, taking her seriously; "but I'm afraid that is hopeless. They have preserved their

lives in respectability, and lost their souls in the process."

There was a knock at the study door.

"There's about fifty gintelmin in th' parlor t' see Mister Ruden," said Nora, the Irish servant.

"It's your entire standing committee, Stephen!" said Mrs. Ruden on her return from greeting them. "What on earth can they want?"

"They've come to inform me of a raise in my salary," he said, smiling.

"They've come to raise Cain, judging by their looks," said the woman, who hated slang.

In the five years of his pastorate, there had been very few disagreements of any kind. The minister had no apprehension.

"Tell them I'll be down in a few minutes."

Ten minutes later, pale and trembling, the pastor greeted eleven stalwart spiritual leaders of his Fairport parish.

"Parson," said Jed Brewster, "we've come to hev a friendly chat with you, an' they've asked me to open up."

"Well, open up, Jed!"

A mild titter went around.

"Them sermons on th' prophets you've been givin' us lately—they're a trifle odd for you!"

"Too near the earth, Jed?"

"Waal—I guess that's about it. But I'm only one," continued Jed; "there is ten others here—they'll hev to speak for themselves."

So they spoke—one after another.

"Well, if you'll excuse me," said Deacon Saunders, "I hev a habit of speakin' m' mind, an' it strikes me like this: Them prophets away back there done a

heap of screamin' agin riches. Now, I ain't rich, so can't be accused of standin' up for myself; but folks who hev some of this world's goods in our church hev been mightily affronted at what's bin said."

"At what I have said, or the prophets?" asked the minister.

"P'haps both of ye!" said the deacon, with a thin smirk.

"I may be dull," said Brother Davison, "but I never could understand that Old Testament. It's out of my depth. There's so much fightin' an' hate there. I like the New Testament, where it's all love—love for mine every time!"

"How many more have ye in the course, parson?" asked the church treasurer.

"Two more."

"The reason I ask is because if they were strung out much longer, we wouldn't have enough income to pay the coal bills—much less the pastor's salary!"

There was a long pause.

"Brother Stimson," said Jed, "let's hear from you."

"I'm not so particular about sermons," said Stimson; "but that sermon on 'They shall walk with me in white' suited me down to the ground."

"Ye can't do much with human nature when it's all riled up," said Deacon Bowen, when it came his turn to speak. "It's all right for an evangelist t' nettle us, for he's only here for a short spell—as ye might say; but it's sure to go hard with a regular pastor, who's sot down among us for life."

"Now understand, parson," said Jed, "we're not here to put up a kick, but just t' sorter speak so's ye'll know what's in th' air,"

"That's so," broke in Stimson, and several others nodded approval of the suggestion.

Hans Peterson was a member of the governing board by virtue of his office as president of the young people's society, and when they had all spoken, he said:

"Them sermons seem t' have hit you, brethren, where the rent does. They struck me as bein' th' best talks I've ever heard; but, of course, I'm no judge."

There was another pause. Each man had delivered himself. It was the minister's turn. His wife sat in the next room within hearing distance, but out of sight.

"Well, parson," said Jed Brewster, "we'd like t' hear from you. You know what we think of you—perhaps we're all wrong ourselves."

"No—" said Ruden slowly, "I haven't a word to say. I've been in bed most of the day; but even if I were well, I think I should be at a loss for words."

They looked at each other.

"P'raps we can talk it out later?" Stimson suggested.

"P'raps so," said Jed.

They arose, one after another—each in turn shaking hands with Ruden, and trying to smile as they expressed in a maudlin manner their sympathy for his physical condition.

"Gentlemen—" said Ruden, as they neared the door through the hall, "may I remind you that none of you have mentioned the name of God to-night, nor has anyone suggested that the situation might be helped by prayer."

"That's so!" said Jed, who was the ever-ready spokesman of the nonplussed delegation.

They filed back into the parlor, knelt on their knees

and besought God for the health of the "beloved pastor."

"My God!" exclaimed Madeline, as the door closed. "What a stupid lot!"

"My dear," said Ruden, "be careful! They are the stewards of the Church of Christ!"

"Poor Christ!" she said indignantly. "How weary he must feel!"

The minister dragged himself to his couch. His wife made a cup of tea and set it beside him. They were both silent for a long time. Mrs. Ruden was distressed with conflicting emotions. She saw herself objectified in the complaint of the church board. They were a mirror in which she saw herself, and the picture annoyed her.

"Do you know, Stephen, I had to hold my chair tightly to keep from breaking in on that committee. I was wild with rage!"

"My dear, if you see my point of view, I am satisfied."

"Oh—I do, and I don't. At times I feel you are right,—and again, I feel as if I simply cannot stand you any longer. I don't know what to do or think. If I was only sure of your past—your childhood, boyhood and all, I would be more at rest. It's all a mystery to me."

"It is to me, also, as I have told you a hundred times; but, Madeline, you have known me twelve years—these years have not been years of mystery!"

"Yes—I think they have. You have mysteries of mind that I cannot fathom. You have a kinship with the underworld that sickens and discourages me!"

"There is some mystery in it I cannot fathom myself—I don't understand it. At times I feel as if, in

order to satisfy you, I must sacrifice everything in life to the discovery of my father or the record of my birth and parentage; but, Madeline, this anchor holds me as an anchor holds a ship in a storm!" He led her to the crib side of their golden-haired boy. He bent down, pushed back the curls, and kissed the little brow. "He holds me to irksome duty; he binds me to you and daily fastens me as if by ropes of steel to God and the cause of the poor."

There were tears as well as wonder in her eyes when the minister took her in his arms and kissed her good-night.

CHAPTER III

A DANGEROUS NEOPHYTE

"ETHEL is coming to-night, Stephen," Mrs. Ruden said next morning; "what shall I get for dinner?"

"I don't know, dear, and I'm sure Ethel doesn't care."

"How do you know?"

"Well, we've known her for five years. She's the most cultured young woman in the parish, and culture includes good sense."

Ethel Ainsworth was the only daughter of the richest man in the parish. She was a Wellesley graduate and had just closed her second year in a New York Law School. She was twenty-five and accounted very handsome. She was interested in social questions, and had spent a summer vacation in the Chicago stockyards investigating the manner in which her father made his money, as he was a large stockholder in the biggest packing concern in the country.

Mrs. Ruden had inherited a New England kitchen-mindedness from her mother, so spent the entire day getting ready for the evening meal. When Miss Ainsworth arrived at five, mistress and maid were about exhausted. The children were dressed with painful rigidity and neatness. They considered themselves in pound for the rest of the day.

"For pity's sake, get dressed, Stephen," Mrs. Ruden said, as she passed him in the hall. "Dinner will be ready in a few minutes."

"I am dressed, dear," he said.

"You haven't changed your collar!"

"Madeline, have you noticed how Ethel is dressed?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Well, its artistic and sensible."

"She doesn't have to slave along on two thousand a year with three children at her heels from morning till night."

"But even if you had thirty of them dragging at your heels, you might arrange your dress with less stiffness and formality. I speak, my dear, for your own comfort—not mine."

"You told me to make myself at home," Ethel said, as the Rudens came down, "so I have been helping Nora for half an hour."

"The idea, Ethel!"

"Isn't it a good one?"

"For you to think of it, yes; but for Nora to allow you, no!"

"My dear," said Ethel, "we do the same thing ourselves. Mother fusses and fumes for ten straight hours every time Mr. Ruden comes to tea! I used to hate the sight of a preacher, but I have more important things to talk over to-night. You've had a visit from the official board, haven't you?"

"Yes—" said Ruden, "I wondered what you would think of it."

"Well—we'll talk it over later."

Miss Ainsworth helped the children through the ordeal by telling the story of Siegfried. After dinner, she played selections from Grieg and Chopin on the piano, concluding with the singing of "My Rosary."

"Let us go up to the study," Stephen suggested.

"I have a few things to attend to, Ethel. You go

to the study with Stephen, and I will join you in a few minutes."

"What are you going to do?" she asked the minister as soon as they were seated.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh—perhaps I've begun at the wrong end."

"If you have important news, wait a few minutes until Madeline comes."

"There are a few things I want to say before she comes!" Ethel said in a way that startled the preacher.

"Go ahead, then!" he said.

"Three years ago you awakened my dead soul—that only happens once in a lifetime. Since that day I have been as devoted to you and your interests as Clare was to Francis. All of that is a preface to this: I know the battle you are fighting—it is in the city, in the church and in your home. I know it all—every detail. In a year, somehow, somewhere—I will take my stand by your side. The vision is one, the fight the same—"

"My dear," said Stephen, as his wife entered, "I have stemmed the tide of Ethel's gossip until you arrived."

"Good; now, dear girl, lift up the flood-gates."

"I wonder if either of you people really know what is going on in the parish? I don't think you do. As you know, the committee was merely the mouth of the interests. Money doesn't need a mouth—it's cheaper and saves trouble to hire one. My old Dad has been in a storm ever since the public hearing. Other men of the front-pew kind have been at our house. They have discussed pro and con; then the poor dupes who hold office were told to act—and they came here like poodle dogs.

“Mr. Ruden, they have decided that you are a Socialist, and Waddell is the tool to be used to oust you and to rob you of four hundred dollars of your salary; and, as they know that church membership will support you, they fear a meeting or a vote—so it’s a case of starving you out. It’s cut and dried, so don’t delay! Read your resignation next Sunday, and give the church a chance to act on it before the interests can make a move that will embarrass you!”

“But, my dear girl,” said the minister’s wife, “why do you so violently oppose your father in this matter?”

Ethel looked at her for a moment in astonishment.

“There’s a passage in the Bible somewhere,” she said, “which speaks of a time when those who have wives shall be as though they had none—Mr. Ruden can quote it correctly—but it may be that the same is true of daughters and fathers. If a burglar was on the way to rifle your house of its contents and I gave you warning, would you ask me why I betrayed the burglar?”

“I was thinking, dear, of what it must cost you to be true to your conscience!”

“It doesn’t seem to me that you fully grasp the situation, Mrs. Ruden,” Ethel went on. “Here, for five years your husband has taught and led his people. There never was a whisper of complaint. He could stand there in the pulpit and smash their faith in God—in a life beyond. He could do what thousands have been burned at the stake for, and they would still love him; but the moment he touches the economic question, his work is done—it is done now!”

“This man, Waddell, for whom your husband has done so much, explained to my father the other night how he had led your husband into a trap. He laughed

as he told it. He told how he came to the pastor and explained to him that the society could only raise sixteen hundred, but that the church would raise the balance. 'He bit!' cried this Fairport Iscariot, and what you call the 'best people' are saying—'Well, then *legally* he can't collect the four hundred, can he?' He even suggested to father what could be done with the money that ought to clothe your children. It's to paint and repair the parsonage for your husband's successor!'

Madeline stretched herself on the couch and sighed.

"Oh," she said, "I'm so sick of it all—gossip, intrigue and double-dealing everywhere; and in the church they assume their vilest shapes!"

"My dear," said Stephen, "we might better adjust ourselves to such things if we were ready to recognize their existence."

"Well, if *you* will bear children and look after them, I'll recognize and adjust myself to conditions around me. I'll have time then," she replied.

"Adjustment to the gods is the first essential, it seems to me," said Ethel. "In teaching me that, Mr. Ruden gave to my butterfly life an incentive—an outlook; and the first thing my opened eyes observed was the intellectual paralysis of this community. I saw the women around me toying with clothes and jewelry, and sweating half their entire lives over what they should eat and wear. It was so vulgar; so animal like. In the brutal language of the vulgar rich—'money talks' in our suburb."

"Ethel, my dear," Mrs. Ruden said, sitting erect, "talk is easy and cheap. We are now practically out of an appointment, and we haven't a dollar in the world. We have to eat and we have to feed and clothe

our children; if we could cash our virtues or draw on a rich father, we could afford to take it as easy as you do!"

"Look here, Madeline," Ethel said with flashing eyes, "last summer I spent July and August in the stockyards of Chicago among the people who made my father rich and are making him richer, and from the day I left that inferno, I have not used a dollar of his money—not a dollar. In this I have scorned the advice of your husband—he told me I had a duty to my father; I told him I had a larger duty to my own soul. My brothers objected to my friends because they were poor—solely because they were poor and couldn't wear the same kind of clothes; but I am a person, a human soul. I have a life to live—I must live it *alone* before God and my own conscience. By these eternal standards, I stand or fall!"

"You ought to be ordained, my dear,—"

"And married, too, you will say when I tell you what I have in my soul about another matter. Mrs. Ruden, you talk about bearing children as if you were an old hen laying eggs!"

Madeline stood erect for an instant, twitching nervously. She had something cutting to say, but hesitated. What she did say was a modification of the thought.

"Sit down, please, dear, and let us talk this out quietly," Stephen said soothingly.

"I will not be insulted without at least a protest!"

Ethel arose now, and they stared at each other for an instant. "I am but a girl compared to you, Madeline,—but I have the mind of a woman. If you were as careful about insulting others as you are about being insulted, you would whine and grunt less to your

husband about the terrible burden of bearing children! You would think twice before insulting your children by constantly regretting their existence."

"You seem deeply interested in my husband!"

"I am—but not as a husband. I am interested in him because he is following in the bloody footprints of the Christ without even a Bethany home where he might get his feet washed with love. He is alone, and as he is my father in God, I demand the right to comfort and encourage him!"

Madeline raised her voice—"Sometimes these 'fathers in God' become husbands in the devil!"

"For God's sake change the drift of this conversation," Stephen said. "Nothing can be gained by personalities."

Without taking her eyes off Madeline, and as if she had not heard the minister speak, Ethel Ainsworth said:

"If that becomes true in this case, it will be because you were false to your marriage vows, false to the ideals of your husband, false to God, and a panderer to the vulgar tastes of the characterless people of the community!"

Madeline arose and hastily left the study. The minister and his guest arose simultaneously and looked into each other's eyes. What they saw, eternity only can reveal—but each saw something they had never seen before.

"I am sorry," he said, but he could get no further.

"You are not!" Miss Ainsworth said. "You are glad—you know you are; don't be a coward!"

"Then I am glad you expressed yourself and that it is over!"

"It is not over. Such things are over when life is

over. Shake the dust of the community from your feet. If there is a God, He will support you. If there be any virtue left, it will rally to your aid; but whatever you do, don't let any man nor woman nor circumstance blur that vision. The vision you have shown me must not fail you in your hour of need!" Before he could speak, she was gone—and the front door had just closed when Madeline entered. She was pale and excited.

"I don't want to be unreasonable, Stephen—I have only myself to blame. I told Ethel's mother in confidence some of the things she hurled at me to-night! I feel the ground slip from under my feet—I feel everything moving away from me. I am losing you—no, not your body, but your soul of fire that swept me off my feet years ago! Help me—help me! Oh, Stephen, for Christ's sake help me!"

She put her arms around his neck and wept. He laid her gently on the lounge, and said:

"Sweetheart, we take ourselves and the world too seriously! Let us try to live simply for a big principle for a while; if we don't succeed, we'll try something else."

"It is you, Stephen—you take yourself too seriously!"

"Well, then, let's try again to get some fun out of life as well as service. Let us try to live as well as get a living!"

When he kissed her good-night, there was an understanding—or an understanding and a half.

CHAPTER IV

THE MENACE OF IDEALISM

THE departure of the minister from the Fairport Church almost immediately after the annual meeting was accompanied by a series of protest meetings of a more or less violent nature. The working men introduced to the church membership by the pastor were incensed but powerless. They had a voice in matters of a religious nature but were voteless on questions of management. The saints talked; the sinners attended to the business. The going or coming of ministers is a matter of business and church members as such have no voice in such things.

Mr. Ruden moved his family to a small farm on the outskirts of the city. It was an abandoned farm with a former orchard. There were sixteen acres, but about fourteen of them were stones. Arriving about the middle of June and having neither tools nor capital, the cry "back to the land" meant very little to him. A discredited minister is dead wood on a lecture list, and most of his engagements were cancelled. While he was enjoying the fruit of respectability in Fairport, the Colonial Union, a debating society of the University, had scheduled him for a lecture on "The Changing Social Order," but as the time drew nigh to deliver it, there was considerable dissatisfaction among the patriotic students. Being accused of being a Socialist, he gave diligent study to the matter and the thing he

feared came upon him. The thing gripped and held him.

"Who got this fellow to lecture?" asked an indignant student on the campus on the afternoon preceding the lecture.

"Stirling got him," said a bystander.

"Does Stirling know he's an anarchist?"

"By Jove," said young Oglethorpe, "if he's an anarchist or Socialist we ought to give him a warm reception!"

"Let's hunt him up," said Slesberger, one of the bystanders.

"Who?"

"Stirling!"

Off to Old South Middle went four youths who had suddenly made themselves guardians of "the university's good name."

"What are you fussing about?" Stirling asked, as the fellows inquired with a frown what it all meant.

"Look here, Oglethorpe—what do you know about this preacher?"

"Everybody knows he's a Socialist or an anarchist, don't they?" answered the Southern youth.

"One at a time," said Stirling, as three of them spoke at once.

"You first, 'Ogle,' what is a Socialist—do you know?"

"Any fool knows!"

"Then tell me!"

"Get a dictionary," suggested Ryan.

"No, let the dictionary alone until we get through."

"Well," said Oglethorpe, "a Socialist is a man who wants to divide up the world's property."

"Is that all?"

"Be damned! no, it isn't. They all believe in free

love and all sorts of fool vagaries. We'll have a mass meeting to protest to-night as sure as hell!"

"I'm not a Socialist," said Stirling, when the boys had sufficiently demonstrated their ignorance; "but when a man writes a book that gives him a place in literature, or stands for a big principle, I want to find out why he is a Socialist. I think it's an opportunity."

The five of them stood on the steps for a minute and looked at each other.

"Say, 'Ogle,'" said Stirling, as he led him aside, "wouldn't it be a joke on you if the specialist who is treating you is a Socialist and at the meeting to-night?"

"What the h—l has that to do with it?"

"It is a commentary on your hypocritical fear that Socialism will lead to free love!"

The reference to the "Dr." incensed Oglethorpe, and he managed to stir up a number of like minded scions of the successful to open revolt. Half a dozen members of the Faculty caught the contagion of fear and discussed the affair together informally, but decided to take no actual part in the matter.

There was a stormy meeting of the executive committee of the Union, and a wrangle over which of them should preside. Ruden's best friend—a local minister—had been asked to perform that function, but it was now the opinion of both the Faculty and their Union that he should be eliminated. Who would call him off? The president refused, but was willing to preside in his stead. Notice of a mass meeting in Alumni Hall had been circulated, and Vanderlip, a freshman, member of the executive committee, was appointed to state the case for the Colonial Union.

About a quarter past eight, old Alumni Hall was

well filled with undergraduates—most of them wondering what it was all about. Lew Oglethorpe of Alabama walked up the aisle, wheeling around when he reached the front of the hall.

“Fellows,” he said, “this is not only a patriotic meeting, but it is a meeting in the concern of the honor of old Colonial. The Colonial Union—composed of freshmen who have not been long enough here to understand—have invited a prominent Socialist or anarchist here to deliver a lecture, and we are here to protest against having any such person address us. I can’t make a speech, but I love my country and don’t want one of its worst enemies to have any honors showered on him here.”

“Oh, you ‘Ogle!’ ” someone shouted.

“Ogle” smiled and sat down. There was a pause. Oglethorpe jumped to his feet, and said:

“I regret this incident because the reverend gentleman is a friend of my family.”

It was Vanderlip’s turn:

“The Colonial Union is composed of Freshmen, it is true; but we are not to assume from that that all the virtues and patriotism of Colonial resides in the Sophomore class. It was like this: Mr. Ruden was asked to lecture under our auspices some months ago,—now it just happens that since we secured him he has become a Socialist. I don’t know what a Socialist is, but I would like to know. Some of these wise Sophomores are chasing rainbows. The great American Republic and old Colonial will survive this shock we feel sure!”

Sleesberger came next. Patriotism was boiling in him. He grew enthusiastic and thumped the back of a chair as if it were a punching bag.

“I don’t care what a man’s title is!” he roared.

"It's the man that counts. These foreigners come here and after they've got a good living, they want what other men have sweat for"—a whack at the chair created a cheer, and four men standing by the door yelled, "Slees—Slees—Slees! Oh, you Sleesberger!"

The fact that Sleesberger was the son of a rich packer who himself had come as a poverty stricken emigrant from Southern Europe was well known. This, with the knowledge the students had of his profligate life, dispelled whatever seriousness there was, and the student body was on the edge of a ludicrous dispersion when one of the assistant professors took a hand in the debate. He counseled patience; said the engagement was made and couldn't be called off, but that it should be a lesson to those in this case involved. "A lecture here on Socialism or anarchy is a virtual indorsement; if not of the *ism*, then of the *ist*—the man who delivers the lecture." This gave the meeting a serious vein, and half a dozen young patriots expressed their fears for the country and the "integrity of the American home."

"To use a parliamentary phrase," said a pale-faced youth, "'there is nothing before the house'—no definite proposition. Most of those who have spoken have unloaded the prejudices of environment. I am of those who speak in public for the first time—I ask for the same patience accorded others in the discussion." He was in the front seat, and as he began to speak, he faced the audience. The hall was filled at that time to overflowing.

"Louder! Louder!" shouted several near the door.

"That's 'Skinny the grind,'" somebody said half aloud. The speaker raised his voice.

"A few months ago the papers of New Oxford told the story of a man who went insane in one of our big

slaughter houses. He was what is called a 'header.' For ten years he cut off the heads of a thousand hogs an hour. That was the work of a muscular arm, lightning rapidity, and a clean blade. Multiply that number by the hours he worked, and you have ten thousand a day. He came home to eat—gulp down a meal—take off his bloody shirt that stuck to his skin, and, like a beast, lie down to sleep. He lost few days in ten years. If he became ill, the firm put two men in to take his place and docked him for every hour. If a few minutes late, he was docked an hour. If he cut his finger, he was docked for the time it took to bind it up. His family grew and his wages fell. He felt himself in the iron clutch of circumstances similar to those that smashed his family life when he was a child—sending parents in one direction and helpless children in another. The cord snapped one day, and he went mad! He ripped his keen blade through five men in about as many minutes. He was adjudged insane and taken away to a madhouse—and the company paid his wife for as much of that bloody day as he decapitated hogs,—and no more. The papers gave no details. They could not tell what I am telling, because the business, the churches and the press are owned by the same people.

"I am that man's son. You wonder why I am here in Colonial. I will tell you: because the daughter of a big stockholder in the slaughter business of which the abattoir on Long Wharf is a branch, went to Chicago a few years ago to investigate how her father made his money, and she found thousands of slaves like my father wallowing all their lives in blood, and she refused any longer to live on the blood money; so she singled out our family, took my name, and against it

in the Bursar's office put that money to educate me. What for? To help remedy these conditions.

"Gentlemen, I never knew what that woman meant until this afternoon when I heard Slesberger, Oglethorpe and Hancock talk of the purpose of this meeting. These young men are concerned about American institutions, about religion and patriotism. Some of you smile—I feel like weeping. I tell you what they are concerned about: they are afraid the beasts will arise and devour them, or worse still,—make them work for a living!

"Young men, the shirts on your backs were bought by the red blood of my father and tens of thousands of other boys' fathers. And we are tired of hunger and exposure and rags, that you—you three, particularly, that I heard talk this afternoon—that you should revel in lust and luxury while we go into your fathers' slaughter houses to slaughter and be slaughtered! My mother has had one dress in ten years. She paid nine dollars for it. About once a year the New Oxford papers tell in detail what your mothers wear. They describe minutely the silks, satins and jewelry!

"You are full-blooded, strong and healthy! All my brothers and sisters are weak and physically deficient. I have scarcely enough body to support my mind. You sneer, Hancock! The Insurance Company of which your father is president, took my father's money for nine years—his policy was paid up until the last minute. We went hungry and naked to pay it; but when my father went insane, the company was technically relieved of responsibility. Out of such penuries of the poor, your father built his yachts and sent you here! Sneer again! sneer at our tears, and laugh at our groans!

“Strange, isn’t it, that I should ever have gotten my neck out of the yoke; but I have—and as I stood listening to your gush this afternoon, my life of misery and the misery of my class passed in review. I saw a long drawn out procession of white slaves,—slaves with stunted bodies and twisted limbs,—naked, dirty and ignorant! I heard their wail of despair, and from the padded cell of my father came a cry that pierced my very soul. And it struck me that Socialism must mean the end of white slavery and injustice; and I swore by the sacred name of Christ that I would follow Ruden and use the education I get here to accomplish the dream of the ages, or give my life in the attempt!”

During the last few words, the boy gripped the back of a chair, but his strength was gone and he slid down the side of the chair to the floor. The meeting dissolved as if by magic. A couple of students carried him to the campus, where, in a few minutes, he regained consciousness.

CHAPTER V

“AND A MAN’S ENEMIES—”

Two hours before the lecture, Stephen Ruden sat in his study in the farm house, quieting himself after a stormy colloquy with his wife. His elbows were on the table and his face was buried in his hands. The patter of little feet in the hall aroused him. A moment later the children pounced upon him and fought for position on his knees. Sacha climbed on his back. They were dressed for bed and had come for prayers and a good-night story. It was a group that might have charmed the heart of any woman. Stephen Ruden loved his children with an unusual love. It was in their innocent lives he found comfort when the outside world frowned upon and disowned him. The children’s hour was the sunshine of his life. It was his encouragement—his hope. He never had been in such dire need of human aid as when they found him in a deep reverie the night of his University lecture.

Mrs. Ruden followed the children into the room. She was silent and sat apart by the window while the children listened with rapt attention to a parable of the barnyard, composed more for the ears of the mother than the children. It was a picture of social conditions, with a suggestion of a way out. It was full of the most subtle satire and engaging humor. The children laughed at the antics of the aristocratic old rooster who introduced the wage system among the hens and

almost wept at the fate of the young cockerel who came to the rescue of the chickens who starved on a worm a day. At his knee the children knelt and repeated their prayer. Then they kissed him good-night and were led away by their mother.

"Stephen," she said, when she joined him again, "I'm sorry I lost my temper when I spoke to you after dinner. I want to talk to you calmly now for a minute before you go to your lecture."

"Well," he said, "I'll listen as calmly as you talk."

"The title of your lecture, 'The Coming Crisis,' gives you all the latitude you need to show the people of this city that you are not as radical as you are supposed to be."

"But, my dear, I am more radical than anyone supposes me to be."

"Well, I'll put it in another way—you decide by your lecture to-night whether you keep or reject your wife and children—whether you remain a respectable member of society or become a nondescript disturber of the peace. I can stand it no longer—I must know before you go out just what you intend to do."

She spoke as she had promised—calmly—but with a determination he had never seen in her manner before.

"I don't think it a choice between a social nondescript and the gangrene of this town's respectability," he said, "but if it were I would rather be a pariah than a Bourgeois nonentity."

"Pardon me," she said, interrupting him. "We have gone over this often enough—tell me now, please, are you going to advocate Socialism, or announce yourself as an advocate—that's a simple question—I want you to answer it!"

“I understand,” he said; “then I answer in the affirmative, just to suit your convenience, but let me say to you that I shall remain the father and guardian of my children—despite you or society—or the powers of hell arrayed against me!”

She lay down on the study lounge and sobbed. He sat silent. Then she arose and said in faltering tones, “I will try not to hate you, but you have spoiled my life—ruined it. I take what is left and make the most of it. Good-bye!”

She went out of the room quickly and he could hear her sob as she descended the stairs. The minister sighed as he put the notes of his lecture in his pocket and went out into the night with a sadder heart than he had ever known.

Three thousand people crowded into Davenport Hall that night to see and hear the man who had given the newspapers so much to do in an otherwise dull season. His friends and enemies both came.

An inane youngster introduced him with the usual platitudes. The customary hand-clapping reception was omitted. His enemies would not, and his friends, feeling that they were in the enemies’ camp, could not,—at least they did not try.

“Socialism is a state of mind,” was his opening sentence. “Political economists have approached it as if it were the framework and bones of a Brontosaurus. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned—it takes a soul to see a soul, and therein lies the secret of the stupidity that thinks it has solved the problem when it asks with an air of sanctity: ‘What is it?’

“It is a diagnosis and a prescription. Small-pox used to be a universal scourge—a world-wide pestilence, but science has almost entirely wiped it out.

“Tuberculosis must also go, for science is after it. Poverty is as old as the world, and its very age is given as a reason why it should perpetuate itself. Poverty is not merely a lack of material essentials, it is a lack of education, refinement, culture, religion. Socialism is Science in a crusade against poverty. The diagnosis is made—there is little difference of opinion on it. The prescription asks for a more equitable distribution of wealth—a distribution based on the labor employed in wealth production and social service.

“Socialism is neither cataclysmal, confiscatory nor iconoclastic. It does not work from the top down, but from the bottom up. It does not dream of correcting evils by the big man—the over-gluttoned, who becomes a philanthropist by stolen goods. It simply prevents his species. It will offset the plutocratic gangrene by the inoculation of a healthy democratic virus. To begin at the top is revolution. To work from the bottom is evolution. History furnishes some gruesome and bloody examples of revolution. They have been explosions, and sometimes have cleared the air, but they have left the working class worse than they found them. There may be more explosions but it is the mission of Socialism to point out their futility. The future state will be built, not on the mistakes or even the injustices of the past, but on what the collective wisdom has demonstrated to be practical and permanent.

“The spirit of Socialism is at work. What it has accomplished will not be repudiated—the steps taken will not be retraced, for while its passion and mission is for the uplift of the toilers its work includes the abolition of classes. It is class conscious because only in that way can class hatred be abolished.

“‘How are we to do it?’ I hear you ask. By attending to first things first.

“The condition of the unemployed—the stunting of the bodies of little children—better housing—housing by the State and the City.

“We have socialized the mail business—the public schools—the fire department—parks—streets—highways—libraries—we teach trades to city boys—and farming to farmers. We are now preserving the coal in Alaska and the public lands and forests for public use. This is Socialism at work and our program is simply this spirit emphasized and pushed as far as the public mind is prepared to push it.”

“What about dividing up?” yelled a student.

“Dividing up what?” asked Ruden.

“The wealth,” was the answer.

Then, with a roar, a thousand of them gave the college yell.

“I never heard of that,” he said, when they subsided. “We do believe, however, in dividing up the opportunity on a more equitable basis.”

“Who is going to dictate what work men will do?” was the next interruption.

“I don’t know,” was the reply—“that’s a question for the future.”

“You Socialists are always talking about the future—and when we ask you anything about it you say you don’t know.”

“Well, that’s the position of the church! She deals entirely in futures and when we ask for details, she says ‘have faith’—what can we do more? We observe a tendency—it is in the direction of the social ownership of the means of production and distribution—

just what shape it will take, our great-grandchildren will be able to tell."

"What about free love and the break up of the family?"

"Free love is the exclusive privilege of the rich. They have time and opportunity, and avail themselves of both. The working class doesn't trouble the divorce court much—it hasn't time. The newspapers give the record—read them and find out who is breaking up the family by its treatment of the working men—but if you mean the old patriarchal family—I say yes—we hope to abolish that, for that was property in women and children. The male owned the female and her offspring. The State is the over-parent and women bearing children within the limitations of the social compact will be taken care of by the State, like any other social servant. But, young gentlemen, permit me to point out that the moment we Socialists speak of righting world wrongs the archaic mind wants a forecast of the future. It wants a scheme like a clock wound up to go a millenium. It dodges the issue of the present degrading system of multi-millionaires and paupers—of injustice, theft, exploitation—it jumps these and asks what it will do a thousand years hence. We don't know—but we ask you college men to help us lift the dead level—to purge parties of graft and self-seeking. You think clearly enough, but you are not alive! Take, for instance, your chief activity here, in Colonial. It's the Y. M. C. A. You have a mission where you take your old worn out junk—you teach the old roustabouts a theology—nothing comes of your activity—and worse still, nothing is expected, for your leaders say plainly and brutally that the chief thing is your practice in talking theology to the hobos.

All you have to offer for social injustice is the platitudes of a medieval theology. You don’t even take that seriously.

“Pardon me, if I seem inconsiderate, but let me give you an illustration of the value of a college training.

“When you men get your bachelor degrees, and you sit a hundred of you around a table—say, in the Waldorf-Astoria—the table is covered with cut glass—with beautifully fashioned silverware, the finest pottery, most expensive linen. Beneath your feet, Turkish carpets and Persian rugs. Around you hang paintings of the masters and decorations by art craftsmen,—here you are in the midst of an aesthetic heaven, an earthly paradise, and not a man among you could even help to make a thing he sees or uses. Yet you are called Bachelors of Art! If a dozen of you were wrecked in mid-ocean you couldn’t build a pontoon to save your lives! You know a little poetry, a little literature, a smattering of foreign and dead languages, but the trend of your so-called education has been away from work—indeed you come here to be fitted to escape it!”

The speaker paused for a moment and the students growled like a pack of hungry animals. There were cat-calls and another college yell.

Ruden stood smiling. When they subsided again, he said: “What have you done with the founder of your religion? He was a carpenter!” He paused a moment. “I am not a preacher—I hate preaching or being preached at—but, young men, life calls so loudly to us—Our country and the world needs men—Men who will not gauge life by what they can get out of it, but by what they can add to the total sum of its progress!”

The thrill that went through the crowd was a result

not so much of what was said as by the personality of the man who said it.

For two hours he spoke direct to the hearts of the men. His tongue seemed tipped with fire—he was a living flame.

As he left the hall men tumbled over each other to grip his hand. Young Oglethorpe was much in evidence and trotted by his side as a few Seniors led him to a large dormitory, where he answered questions until long after midnight.

When he returned to the farm Mrs. Ruden was in her room awaiting him. Her eyes were red and swollen. She was quiet, but evidently distressed.

“I am going to the Oglethorpe’s,” she said, as he seated himself by her side.

“The Oglethorpe’s!” he gasped.

“Yes—why are you surprised?”

“Well, if what you told me of Mr. Oglethorpe be true—”

“Of course,” she interrupted—“he’s a man of the world—but he’s successful and Mabel is happy.”

“And the children?” Ruden asked.

“Mother wants them, as you know, for a year.”

Next morning when the daily papers spoke in unstinted praise of the lecture and of the unusual reception accorded the lecturer, Mrs. Ruden almost recalled her decision. A decisive step on her husband’s part prevented a reaction, and a few days later the arrangements for her departure were completed.

CHAPTER VI

A FAIR PROPAGANDIST ENTERS

IN the forenoon of the last day on the farm, Stephen Ruden took his three children to his favorite haunt by the brook to say good-bye. Only Genevieve understood.

"Shall we ever come back to Brook Farm, papa?" she asked.

"No, dear, probably not."

"Never?"

"Oh—some time, perhaps, we may come up here and look at the changes made—when you are a young woman; and perhaps when Sacha comes to Colonial we will visit him and he will take us out for a drive!"

"I know what I will remember best!"

"What, sweetheart?"

"The white birch tree you planted for my birthday!"

Ruden wondered what he would most vividly remember. The boulder, perhaps, for it was to him a Gethsemane of sorrow and tears. He stood them one by one on the big stone and kissed them long and affectionately. Together they knelt, and with one hand on Sacha's head and the other alternating between Genevieve and Alice, he invoked the blessing of God. They sang the hymn that always preceded the evening meal, and then returned to find their mother in readiness for the long journey.

It was about five when he returned from the depot after seeing them off. The sun was sinking behind West Rock in a burst of purple and golden glory. The

ground was covered with leaves. He lacked heart to go indoors on his return, and went past the house, through the yard, and with bent head and hands behind his back, walked slowly down toward the boulder. In a few minutes he was joined by Rover. The big collie whined—perhaps in sympathy, perhaps in sorrow for the loss of Sacha. They might have been painted as shepherd and dog, but the shepherd had no flock—it had left by degrees until he was now alone. There seemed an element of defeat in his loneliness. He longed for tears—there was no one to see them now—but no tears came. He had noticed that his wife had as much as her heart could bear, too. He was thankful for her tears. She had stopped between the farm and Derby Avenue as they went off, and Stephen read in her large eyes a struggle.

“Go on,” she said, “I’m just thinking for a moment.” Then she overtook him and a harder look was there.

He was now going rapidly over the scenes of the past year. His wife could have told each stopping place of his mind by watching his face. Rover jumped to his feet and uttered a low whine, but he was unnoticed by his master until he barked his disapproval at an approaching visitor. A moment later Ethel Ainsworth came down the path.

“Ethel!”

“Mr. Ruden!”

They looked at each other for a moment in silence, then extended their hands.

“I happened to be entering the depot coming from New York as Madeline and the children left. We waved to each other—she was in tears.”

“So you took the car out?”

"Yes, I knew you would be alone, and I wanted to talk to you."

"Let me share my boulder with you. My best friends have shared it. Sacha stood there while I kissed him good-bye to-day. Socialists, beggars and literary men have shared it while we talked. Jack London sat there and made me swear a solemn oath a few days ago. Sit down, won't you?"

"Tell me about the oath."

"Not until you have told me a few of the things hurting your mind for expression!"

"Don't you want to hear some gossip of your former parish?"

"No—thank you! except as it relates to a certain Portia who is now a learned member of the Bar!"

"We will be talking in 'lighter vein' if we are not careful," she said.

"Proceed then!"

"I was at the Davenport Hall meeting."

"I suspected your presence. What did you think of it?"

"It was a crisis in my life!"

"How?"

"You know how I have been ringing the changes on definitions! I have rather gloried in the fact that I couldn't understand Socialism. 'Define it!' I have shouted at you and others. The Davenport Hall meeting cured me—no, I was cured before that! Philip came and told me how the vision came to him on the campus—he thought it due me. In the telling of it, Philip stirred my soul to its depths. At Davenport Hall the positive note was struck—the affirmative intellect was dominant. I felt the charm of it; and as I looked around and contrasted the fire, the

passion of it all with the stagnant marshes of negation and doubt and fear, I saw my duty. It was like tearing one's flesh off—but I tore away from my class and accepted social baptism in that inspiring atmosphere of revolt!"

Her blue eyes flashed, her bosom heaved, and as the former minister watched her, the prophet in him retreated, and the man advanced. Ethel Ainsworth had been a girl—a school girl to him up to this moment; but she had crossed that bridge now and could never return.

"What will you do, Ethel?"

"Give my life to the people!"

"How?"

"Earn a living by practising law and devote my spare time to the propaganda."

"Join the party?"

"Certainly!"

"Good heavens—"

"Don't counsel patience," she said, interrupting him, "or ask me to go slow, or anything of that kind. If you are my friend, urge me to do something big, noble, daring—worth while!"

"You have some daring scheme in mind—what is it?"

"Half a dozen came to me in Davenport Hall!"

"Tell me of them."

"Celia Bauerman, the pretty sixteen-year-old sister of Philip, is infatuated with that rake, Oglethorpe. He has promised to marry her, and the poor thing believes him. Philip doesn't know of it. She works in Hauff's candystore and met him there. When Philip gave me the names of the students who got up the protest meeting, I could scarcely restrain myself! So, as

I sat in the meeting. I conceived of the formation of a society for the protection of workingmen's daughters from Colonial students."

"That would be a sensation!"

"Yes—and nothing less will do. The Colonial authorities ignore the situation, and the churches are afraid to touch it."

"You couldn't make a living in New Oxford and do that."

"Why not?"

"For the same reason that they have starved me out. Don't you remember the case of Mrs. Proteat, the pastor's wife who hinted at something of that kind, and her husband was 'called of God' to Philadelphia?"

"Yes; and Christ was hanged on a tree, and his followers were thrown to the lions—but they had courage! This is an age of backboneless men and butterfly women. It's an age of polite mendacity and effeminate pink teas. In the midst of such a morass, isn't there room for a woman?"

"Yes—room for you; but go in for a big thing!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I have thought some about going South. Madeline is to be in Alabama this winter. Oglethorpe, her host, doesn't know me. I am going to look into labor conditions for a magazine."

He paused for a moment as he looked at her. Then he added: "I wish we could go together."

"You don't mean that, Stephen, do you?" It was the woman in her that spoke, and he was startled and pleased at the sound of his name.

"Certainly, I mean it; but, of course, that's impossible! This is a case of treading the wine press alone. To have you with me would be to infuse me with the

life of a god; but I would be content if one of the hundreds of single young men who have claimed conversion under me would step out and say, 'I'll go!'

"Why doesn't someone?"

"My dear, they are slaves. They profess to believe in God, but they lie or deceive themselves. They are slaves to their stomachs; they might not get enough to eat. They are manacled by the clanking chains of what is called respectability. Only one in a million in this beef age opens the gates of his divinity; the rest have double bolts, and the hinges are rust-eaten!"

"Stephen," she said, laying her hand on his, "what do you mean by 'the life of a god?'"

"This: that since the conscious dawn of manhood, I have thirsted for a fellowship that was evenly balanced—not a mere breeding arrangement, but a soul comradeship with not only the objective of service, but of fun, of laughter and joy. Lysurgus had a statue to the god of laughter in every house in Sparta. So should we; but the struggle to get bread and appear respectable is so absolutely engrossing, that there is no time to live, to laugh, to make a brighter world! By the life of a god, I mean a full life sanely expressed in worship of God and service to man."

She was watching every line of his face. Her lips were parted and her eyes were full. He was expressing the thoughts of her own heart.

"What is a Platonic friendship?" she asked, as she nestled closer to his side on the boulder.

"It's anything from the associations of a bagnio to the friendship of Jesus and Mary!" he answered.

"You don't like the phrase?"

"It is usually used as the cover for a pot of lies, and is overworked at all times."

"What would you call our friendship?"

"It is in its earliest stage. Yours may be the admiration of a neophyte—it may be more. Mine began as the love of a minister for his convert; it grew as you grew. Now it is the love that loves because of what the object is in itself. It has no reciprocal relation—no axe to grind. It goes out and centers in its object; like an arrow it penetrates, and the barbs hold it."

"And if the object changes in character?"

"Love may change, too!"

"Do you remember what Madeline said one night about 'husbands in the devil?'"

"I do—she was right. I think she had in mind a man who shirks responsibility, deserts his wife and children for a now—and often selfish and fleshly love."

"Then, there is danger."

"Yes, of course; but the danger itself is a spice of life—an adventure to the edge; but we are not wound up mechanical toys. We have a choice prerogative and power."

"You are so strong!" she said.

"Be careful, Delilah!"

They laughed.

"Are we in danger?"

"Yes; on the very edge!"

"I wish I could play the heroic part of rescuer—just for once."

"You can, Ethel! Save yourself and me—do it now!"

The rescuer was at that moment breaking through the underbrush, having lost himself in a search for his friend. It was Philip Bauerman.

"Good-bye!" Ethel said as Philip approached.

"Good-bye, comrade—good-bye!" There was a long

look, and an affectionate clasp of the hands—and they went their way.

“Hello, Philip!”

“Hello, Mr. Ruden!”

“Only a few hours left on the old farm, Philip. There are a few points I want to look at—come along. Here—,” said Ruden, “is where I hoped some day to build a little twelve by twelve study of these stones lying around. You see what a fine view of West Rock I have through that vista of trees. Oh, these trees, Philip, have become human to me. Out of these old hemlocks I have gotten more sympathy than from anything around me!”

To his right, as he faced the rock, loomed up an ugly ice house on the edge of a pond, and beyond it—the still uglier structure around Colonial field; and away beyond, the city of New Oxford. He took leave of his favorite walks and views. He looked over the scene of his failure in farming and laughed as he told Philip of the crops that went in and never came out.

Then, as if talking to himself, he said: “I must begin life over again, learn a new trade and adapt myself to changed conditions. People and things, wife and children, home and friends have fallen away from me as mist before the sun. I am alone—and one might as well be dead as alone.” Philip recalled him from his reverie: “There are some things left.”

“Ah, yes, Philip, I am ungrateful.—Some big things are left—God and the yeast stirrers are left and I must get close to both!

“As the marsh hen builds on the watery sod

Behold I must build me a nest on the greatness of God.”

CHAPTER VII

MUCKERS IN THE MUSCLE MARKET

A DOZEN men lounged around a table in the Magyar Slovensky Hotel, a low, cheap combination of labor agency and lodging house in Greenwich Street, New York. Most of them were recent arrivals. One of them was a Hungarian youth of nineteen, named Franz. He was quaintly dressed in tight-fitting trousers, black velvet jacket trimmed with silk, and a George Fox hat. It was his first day in the United States, and he was innocently parading his finery. A different sort was "Joe, the Polak," who sat beside Franz. Joe was twenty, wore a pink shirt open at the neck and collarless. He had been in the country about a year and had taken several long distance trips into the labor market of the South and far West. His black shocky hair hung profusely over his forehead. With both feet propped on a chair, he was leisurely rolling cigarettes and taking the measure of his companions while awaiting the call of the camp. Three of the others were stranded German sailors; two were Swedes, two Russians, and one Bulgarian. Most of them were picturesque—all of them save one tough of muscle and bronzed, and all, save one, bore the labor look—they had the tang and odor of the ground. Stephen Ruden was the exception. He stood with his elbow on the bar, trying to feel at home, but every man in the place knew instinctively that he did not belong there. He had a six weeks' growth of beard, had neglected his hair, wore a cotton

shirt open at the neck, and carried a bundle wrapped in a bright yellow muslin. But he was not disguised. Of course, the fickle dame had sent fine men in rags down there before, but it only takes a gesture, a look, a word, to betray to such a group as lounged around that table the difference between such a man and themselves.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when the landlady, Mrs. Reiss, shuffled into the midst of the group. Mrs. Reiss weighed two hundred-fifty pounds. Her bullet-shaped head sat well down on her fat shoulders. Her face was wrinkled and yellow. She was loosely arrayed in a mother-hubbard with a large girdle indicating the waist line. Jerry, the old Irishman who swept the place out and sprinkled the sand on the floor every morning, was just finishing his work when she entered.

"Vell, Cherry!" she said, "vat you vas last night, hey? Drunk, I bet, hey? Agh—you Gott tam lazy Irisher!"

Jerry hung his head and glanced out of the corners of his eyes at Ruden. Then she directed her attention to Ruden.

"Where you come? Greenhorn, hey—yes?"

"Yes," Ruden answered, "very green."

"Where you go—Alabam'? Hey? Nice boy!" she said, coming closer and tickling him under the chin.

Ruden rolled a cigarette. His companions looked and laughed.

"P'what an edge!" Jerry whispered to Ruden as he passed him.

Once a day "the agent" visited the hotel and gathered up whatever had drifted into the net.

"You shtand up nice und goot," Charlie, the assist-

ant, said to Ruden, "und maype you'll go; but py golly, I don't know for shure!"

He had some doubt, for while thirty thousand men went South from such agencies every year, Americans and Irish might as well not apply. This was a discovery to Ruden. Charlie's explanation may have left nothing unsaid: "Dey kicka up hella alla time everywhere!"

The agent was an American—a young man. When he arrived, they stood up for inspection.

"What have you got?" he asked Charlie, as he eyed the group.

"Tam goot men all—every one!"

One by one they were taken into the inner office, and to each was read the printed labor contract. Big hope these contracts built up—two, three and four dollars a day. They were made for a year and stipulated that out of the first three months' pay the passage money should be refunded. If the party of the second part stayed six months, the company promised to make him a present of his fare.

"Where you go?" Joe asked Ruden, "Alabam'?"

"Yes."

"Ah—" he sighed, as he shook his head, "Alabam' hell! I bin dere—I know."

Joe was conveniently absent when the agent was around. There were other calls from Jersey and Long Island, and for one of these Joe waited. With night came two men from Jersey looking for "hands" for truck gardens; but the highest figure was too low for him, so he visited several other agencies in the neighborhood, but without success.

A mutual confidence sprang up between Franz and Ruden. There was a sympathy in the older man's face

that the young stranger was quick to detect and take advantage of. With the exception of a tour through the other agencies with Joe, Ruden kept close to Franz. Communication between them at first was difficult, for Franz knew nothing of English and only a smattering of German.

When the regular boarders—longshoremen, peddlers and truckmen—vacated the basement dining-room, the labor contingent was ordered to get what was left. After supper the labor men under contract mingled with the regular boarders and talked muscle market until Mrs. Reiss handed Ruden an inch of tallow candle, and said—"Blow it out for shure when youse lie down."

Room number twelve in the Magyar Hotel is a sort of Micawber dormitory for contract-men *in transitu*. It was filled so full of beds that some of them could only be reached by climbing over the others. Each bed was furnished with a horse blanket and a sheet. The sheets looked as if they had been dried in a brown wind. The walls were damp and were paraded by battalions of cockroaches. The floor, like the bar-room, was sanded.

Joe shut all the windows tightly. The men lay down together on the cold sodden beds as if they had known each other a lifetime. Ruden had an overcoat. He buttoned it to the chin and lay down beside Franz, extinguishing the candle as he was told, when it was no longer needed. Sleep was impossible. A creeping fire attacked Franz and Joe. The rats began to explore, and finding some tallow on Franz's shoe, began to nibble it. Then Jerry came in half-drunk and clambered over the bodies in search of a vacant spot, each man throwing him on top of the next one as he went along. The elevated trains rattled and screeched past the house all night. The hotel is at the point on Greenwich

Street where two lines meet. Mrs. Reiss brought several men up during the night, and pushing them inside in the dark, would say,—“Plenty room—lie down—go sleep!” The men grunted, exclaimed, grit their teeth, and swore.

Ruden and Franz talked in German, but when Franz was attacked, as he frequently was, he exclaimed in Hungarian. There was something strangely familiar in these exclamations to Ruden. They were like sounds of a life he had lived before. The strangest part of it was that he understood them as easily as he did Franz’s bad German. He had no recollection of ever having heard a word of Hungarian until he entered the Magyar Hotel, and he was startled when the thought occurred to him that he had struck the first clue to his parentage and childhood. It was under these circumstances that he lisped over again, under the tutorship of Franz, what he knew must have been the language he learned on his mother’s knee. For this recall of the past, he taught Franz in an undertone the pronunciation and meaning of the English equivalents of the small vocabulary of key words he mastered in the sleepless hours before the dawn.

“Did you sleep well, Joe?” Ruden asked.

“Hella, no!” Joe said. “All anight dese sons of ——— stinga me bad!”

When the Magyar Hotel contingent arrived at the dock of the Old Dominion Steamship Company, it was joined by several others. The total number, as they made a final muster, was seventy-two, half of whom were Greeks. Four negro deck hands roped them into several divisions with the same freedom and in much the same language that they managed a carload of cattle. When the thirty or forty bunks beneath the fo-

castle were filled, the rest were corralled amidships and each provided with a stretcher.

"Pardon me," Ruden said to a negro who was tying a setter dog to a stanchion close by,—“would you mind tying your dog over there near the side?”

The negro was a temporary nurse to a high class setter whose master was going South to hunt.

"Yes, sah—Ah do mind—this yere spot 's d' cleanest around' yere, an' Ah guess dis yere is whar he'll hang out!"

"Were you told to tie him here?"

"Yes, sah! Ah sho was; Ah told m'self, an' dere's two more to come!" He laughed as he departed to bring the others.

"Can't these dogs be put somewhere else?" Ruden asked a petty officer.

"Them dogs are first-class passengers!"

"Oh—and we?"

"You ain't passengers at all—you're freight!"

Ruden was silent. The officer bit a mouthful of tobacco off his quid and grinned.

The stretchers were arranged in double tiers, and the laborers lounged around them. A German produced a concertina and furnished music. Two Italians sang a duet; others sat in small groups and told stories. They were happy, apparently, and care-free.

"What are you reading, Franz?" asked Ruden in a mixture of German and Hungarian, as Old Point Comfort was sighted.

"Ein Meistershaflesbuch!"

It was a Magyar New Testament, and as it was yet dark, Franz was reading by the light of matches—a verse to a match.

The comrades were on deck early, and after an hour

in language lessons, Franz produced a marvelous collection of certificates. He had them in order. The midwife's, of course, came first; then the registrar of vital statistics; vaccination; school in all the grades he had passed through; changes of residence; apprenticeship; citizenship; baptism; confirmation and church membership. Every phase of life was catalogued and officially attested. He was prouder of some than of others. The favorites were the ones with red government seals. He had graduated as a journeyman butcher, and after the display of certificates and diplomas, he spread out his case of butcher's knives, handling each one with something akin to affection.

There was a long wait at Norfolk for a train.

"Don't any of youse move out of that door," said the boss of the gang, "or ye may get a bullet in yer—see?"

They were in the depot—and were served with three feet of bread, a box of sardines and a half pound of cheese each. The ration was to last the day.

"Come on, Franz—we'll have a look at Norfolk," Ruden said.

"The hell ye will! Make a move now and see!"

Ruden took the man gently by the arm to one side. "Look here," he said quietly, "these poor souls do not know the game; I do. Now, we are going around the city, and if you make a move—if you lift a finger, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life before the gang, then I'll have you arrested!"

The boss stuck his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, glared fiercely for a moment, and then said—

"Well, don't be too long—see!"

It was after sundown before they were shipped to Portsmouth and driven on board the train. A negro

took Ruden by the shoulder and led him with his yellow bundle along the platform; the others followed. When they entered the car, Ruden noticed the sign of the "Jim Crow Car." Several colored people were already seated. When they were seated and their bundles stored under the seats, Ruden stopped the big black porter in the aisle, and said:

"I thought you had a law in the State of Virginia about the separation of the races?"

The black man showed his white teeth in glee. "Dere sho is, boss; but bless yo' soul, honey, youse ain't no races—youse is jest Dagoes, ain't youse?"

It was Ruden's turn to smile. He imagined he would fare better with the conductor who swept into the car with the air of an admiral on half pay. He wore gold-rimmed glasses, immaculate linen and a glitter of brass buttons. Ruden stepped in front of him as he came up the aisle.

"Brother," he said, "why do you stuff us white men into a 'Jim Crow Car'? I thought there was a law down here against that."

The conductor uttered not a syllable. He turned back, took the yellow card out of the frame, turned it and it read, "*White*." The colored people jumped to their feet and made for the door, but were pushed back by the porter with the assurance—"Dat's a bluff; it don't mean nothin'."

The typical passenger train in the South is due when it arrives; and as for freight trains, the conductor makes the time schedule as he goes along.

After two days' snailing, side-tracking and changing, the gang arrived at Atlanta. There it was split into four parties. A woods-foreman of the Blockheart Lumber Company took Ruden's section in charge. He

was a short, stout, smooth-faced man, named Gallagher. He had the look of a fighter; his mouth was a mere slit across his face, large nose, small eyes, and deep furrows ploughing their way in all directions. He carried his coat over his arm, and out of each hip pocket bulged the butt of a Colt revolver.

Blockheart is a small town in Alabama, near the Florida line. It is an aggregation of square huts surrounding a lumber mill, and owned by the Company. Seven miles out in the pine forest was situated Camp Number One, popularly known as "The Gulch." A small company road called the "Dixie Route" was the connecting link, and on a lumber tract of the Dixie Route, in the early part of October, 1905, went Ruden and his companions to the forest.

The camp consisted of a train of box cars on the rails arranged like a Bowery lodging house for the accommodation of the lumber-Jacks. A group met the incoming train, for a carload of Greenhorns was announced and on such occasions each nationality in camp looked out for its own.

"Wie Gehts?" shouted Hans, a German teamster, and all the Germans in the new party replied. The next exclamation was Polish, and then a Russian called out and was answered. Faces were expectant at such times, and each man's mind was across the sea—each for a moment filled with a big hope. A youth removed his cap, and shouted: "Hogyvan!" It was a Magyar salutation and startled Franz; but he was late in answering, and quick as a flash Ruden replied:

"Jól Baratom!"—hello comrade—as he stepped forward and gripped the man by the hand.

Old Jordaneff, the Bulgarian, raised his voice; but there was no response—he was alone. A muscular

thick-lipped Celt stood by, pipe in mouth, with folded arms.

“T’hell wid yez!” he said, as he turned away in disgust. “There isn’t a maan among yez that spakes a dacent langwidge nor comes from a dacent town!”

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAW OF THE FOREST WRIT IN LEAD

A LUMBER camp to a lover of nature looks like a battlefield—a place of execution. From sunrise to sunset is heard the click of the executioner's axe, and every few minutes a thunderous crash that shakes the earth as each giant of the forest falls and leaves behind him a vacant spot against the blue Southern sky. A train of a hundred cars loaded with logs and pulled by a snorting steam demon looks like a catafalque on its way to a place of burial. In the wake of the lumber king lie millions of acres of black bleeding stumps—a scene of desolation and despair that chills the sensibilities and makes one wonder what future friends of the forest will think of the age of annihilation—an age in which lumber kings took no thought for the life of bird or beast or man; an age in which the axe not only cut down the trees, but cut off the rain of the heavens and left millions of birds and beasts homeless.

At six o'clock the morning after their arrival, the new gang were put to work. Franz was the only man who demurred. As sacred as the thought of God to him was the thought of the law. There was but one law—one kind of justice—and to his simple mind, these things were alike the world over. When he carefully packed his certificates and diplomas in his grip, they were to carry him over the earth.

"What's the fuss about?" Gallagher asked, as he came out of the box-car at daybreak.

"He says his contract calls for two dollars a day and board," said Shandor, the interpreter, "and if he doesn't get it, he won't work!"

"Ha ha!" laughed Gallagher, the woods-foreman, "he does, hey? Well, we'll break 'im in a day or so."

Franz shook his head and muttered to Shandor something about the Law.

"The Law!" exclaimed Gallagher, as he whipped out one of his revolvers and leveled it at the youngster's head—"tell 'im this is the law here, and that it writes with lead!"

"What's this fellow?" Gallagher asked, going to Ruden—"A Sheeney or a Dago?"

"A Magyar," the interpreter said.

"What the hell's that?" he asked. "Let's have it in English!"

"He comes from the same place as this young fellow that's kicking about his contract."

"Why ain't he kickin'?"

"He hasn't read his yet."

Ruden hung his head and kept silent.

"He looks husky enough for a teamster; give him to Archie!"

"That's a Sheeney; I know b' the cut of 'is jib!" He pointed to Orminsky, a young Russian, who, on the journey South, was known as "Squarehead." By the time Gallagher spoke to Orminsky, the newcomers had all gathered around the little master-mind of the forest. He looked them carefully over, joking over the looks of one, suggesting a department for another, and finally, to the group, he made some remarks in general:

"I want t' give you men a tip or two before ye strip t' yer job," he said. "We've put up th' dough for yer trip down here; here's the work, plenty of it, and here's

the finest grub ever put out of a camp kitchen. What them fellers in New York promised is none of our business. The pay is a dollar a day and grub. Now, we've had some little trouble with loafers comin' an' goin' away again before they paid their fare; now, if any fool notion like that gits a holt on ye, cut it out, or we will! We've got four dogs over there that cost five hundred plunks apiece; we've trained 'em on niggers, an' if one gits a grip on any ov ye, ye'll think it's yer turn t' pass in yer checks! This ain't no place to sell shoestrings nor them rings ov bread on a stick I've seen on th' Bowery. It's a place t' work! The company says to me—"Git out a hundred thousand logs a day or quit!" It's up t' me; that's how th' thing stands! Now yer onto th' game!"

Ruden interpreted this later to Franz, and advised him to go to work; but the boy shook his head.

"What is he—" Franz asked, "an officer as well as boss? Is he a sheriff?"

"Just a boss, Franz; but he controls these men by fear."

The rising bell of the day rang at five A. M., the breakfast bell at five-thirty and the third sound at six was for work. The labor went with precision of a penitentiary, and at the first sound of the six o'clock bell, thirty teams of powerful horses were led out of the barn and driven to the drift for the first loads of the day.

Ruden knew nothing about horses, but he mounted old Larry and led by his side Steel, the four-year-old giant that pranced like a cavalry charger as he followed the cavalcade down the hill to the edge of the woods where the thin white mist almost entirely obscured the trees. The trucks were at the drift, and Ruden's first difficulty came in the hitching process.

The multitude of straps and buckles bewildered him, but he was prepared for such emergencies.

"Sam," he said to a negro, "you look like a man who could hitch two teams while an ordinary man was hitching one. This hitching business isn't in my line, so I have a big package of 'Peerless' tobacco for the man who does the trick for me!"

"Boss," said Sam, when he saw the yellow package, "der ain't no quicker hitcher in Alabama!"

The sawyers went first and lowered the trees. The rampers followed, trimmed and cut them into lengths. The loading crews piled the giant pines on the trucks, and the teams drew them away from the drift to the ramp by the railroad. These divisions, by long practice, learn to work like clockwork, and denude a forest in quick time. Probably the cleanest job was the teamster's. In an hour, with the help of Sam, Ruden was well enough acquainted with the work to escape notice or comment. Just before the teamsters unhitched for dinner, Gallagher with Dr. Brace, the veterinary, drove past the drift at a gallop. In the back of the buggy crouched two of the company's bloodhounds.

"Somebody's g'wine ter lose d' seat ov der pants befo' long!" said Sam.

"Where is he going?" Ruden asked.

"After some poh nigger what's tuk French leave, Ah guess."

"Perhaps it's a white nigger?" suggested Ruden. "Sho'ly boss, sho'ly,—but Ah know what dese yer dogs kin do; Ah bin done—had dem arter me twice!"

"Did you run away?"

"Not on yo' life; but Mister Barlan sez to me one day, sez 'ee, 'Sam mend yo' licks'—sez 'ee to Florida

thro d' woods—'ef d' dogs overtakes ye'—sez 'ee—'don't git skeer't, fur dey don't mean no harm.' He give me two bits, and sez 'ee—'Now make a break!' Boss, Ah went thro' dat patch o' woods like d' devil was at m' heels; but, bime by, up dey came a-snortin' and a-sniffin'. Ah jumped up a tree, but Ah was just a mite too late, fur bless gracious if dat hound didn't take d' hull seat ov ma pants at a bite, an' down Ah come wid a yell what'd wake d' dead! Dat houn' hilt on an' d' oder one get a grips on me too, an' d' boff on 'em hilt on like cockleburrs on an' ol' hoss till Mister Barlan come an' turn me loose!"

"Didn't they bite you, Sam?"

"D' second time dey chew ma legs like dey was sausages!"

The topic around the camp during dinner hour was the escape of three men during the morning. Franz was one of them, Mike Trudies another, and old Jordaneff, the Bulgarian, the third. Ruden discovered that they had gone in different directions, which meant that probably but one of them would be caught that day.

The discovery that the water used at the camp was taken from a stagnant pool led Ruden to follow an almost dry ditch for a few hundred yards through the woods in search of a drink of clean water; at least, as clean as the Gulch could provide. Sam had volunteered to watch his team and pull it to one side when loaded. He expected to be gone but a few minutes, but kept on along the swampy edge of the ditch until he came to a road. He knew that his team was loaded and ready, but the fascination of the road—a long avenue of the mightiest pines—held him for an instant in a temptation to enjoy a walk through them. In that instant he heard laughter, and then a scream of terror.

His first thought was Gallagher—then of a hasty retreat. Life to these bandits of the forest is as cheap as lumber—and of less consequence. To be discovered there, meant abuse and maybe more. Another cry! This time it struck terror to his very soul and seemed to freeze the blood in his veins.

“Jay! Istenem!” rang through the pines. It was an appeal to God from the lips of a Magyar. The emotions of fear, dread, cowardice and courage swept over one another quicker than the ticking of a clock. Around the bend of the road there was a problem. It might mean his life. Should he risk it? Was it worth while? To die like a dog by the hand of a dog was less than life demanded of him. The coward prevailed for an instant—maybe it was wisdom; the decision was changed, however, as quickly as made, for Gallagher’s buggy came in sight at a fast trot, the veterinary beside him, and at the end of a rope, poor Franz.

Ruden put a tree between him and the scene. Cold clammy sweat covered his face; his legs seemed unable to support his body. Within twenty yards the buggy stopped—Franz had fallen and was being choked to death! Like an enraged panther Ruden sprang to the scene. The rope was tied around Franz’s neck, his trousers hung in bloody ribbons about his legs, and the work of the hounds was evident at a glance. Ruden whipped out his knife, cut the rope and stood Franz on his feet.

“Damned infernal cowards, both of you!” he shouted, as he glared at them with fire-lit eyes.

“Take the lines, Brace!” said Gallagher, as he threw them aside and jumped to the ground. Winding the lash of his whip around his right hand, he struck at Ruden’s head. The leaden butt rendered powerless the

left arm held up as guard; Ruden's right fist shot out and caught Gallagher in the neck beneath the chin, lifting him completely off his feet and dropping him on his back.

"Pot th' bastard—pot him Brace!" he yelled.

Ruden wrenched the whip out of Gallagher's hands, handed it to Franz. "Fight!" he said.

Brace stood up in the buggy and pointed his revolver.

Gallagher was proud of the way he could trounce the average Jew or foreigner that came to the camp, and while Brace was making up his mind to shoot, Gallagher made a second rush at Ruden, only to be met with a right hand smash to the jaw, which staggered him, and another that brought him to his haunches. Up to this time he had either forgotten or was afraid to use his own gun. Now, chagrined and beaten, he drew and fired. The ball entered Ruden's breast an inch above the heart, ploughed its way through the body and lodged beneath the skin of his back. As he sprang at the bully, another ball entered his wrist and tore its way up his arm to the elbow. He got Gallagher's gun, but too late. He dropped on the road exhausted.

Brace covered Franz, who was so panic-stricken with fear that he dropped too; and a hurried conference was held as to the next move.

"If I could trust your damned mouth, Brace, I'd finish the suckers and bury 'em in the ditch!" He took the whip and brought the squirming fiery lash down on Ruden's stomach. "Come on, you d—d Sheeney, or I'll finish you!"

Ruden writhed in agony on the road. Gallagher went over to Franz and drove his foot into his ribs. A low grunt from the youth, and he turned over, relaxed, as if in death.

“For Christ’s sake, don’t murder them!” Brace said.

“Shut up, you horse’s ——!” shouted Gallagher, as he mounted the buggy to drive away. As he took the reins out of Brace’s hand, a farmer drove up.

“Hello,” he said, “what’ve ye got, Teddy?”

“Oh, only a couple of Bowery toughs shootin’ up th’ camp!” said Gallagher.

The Magyars were lifted into the farmer’s wagon and driven behind Gallagher to the camp. They were stretched on a couple of mattresses in the woodshed at the end of the stable. Dr. Tremble, the physician of the lumber camp, was sent for. He extracted two balls from Ruden and set Franz’s ribs. An hour after their arrival, Joe Maginnis, the only Irishman in the camp, was stretched by the side of the wounded, stricken with typhoid fever.

Ruden counted time by the vibrations of pain for the rest of the afternoon. He could hear men and horses coming and going. He heard every comment made on the capture of Franz. After the doctor left, a deputy sheriff in the employ of the company brought Orminsky back, and the boy who had escaped Kishenev and the black hundred, was tied to the wheel of Gallagher’s buggy just outside the woodshop and flogged with a horsewhip—big Ollie, the teamster, and the blacksmith standing by in case Archie, “the whipping boss,” needed their assistance. Forty times the lash descended; forty times the little Russian winced and twisted. After the thirtieth stroke, the sound changed. There was no more cutting—the whip was merely burying itself in the bloody gutter tracks of the previous strokes. When they untied his wrists, he sank on his knees. The men picked him up and threw him into a corner of the woodshed beyond Maginnis. He turned over on his

stomach and lay there groaning until Sam, having been relieved of his horses, came there in search of Ruden.

"Boss," Sam said, "you'd a better done gone tuk dat water in d' swamp; yo' mout a hed a soh belly, but dat's better'n bein' a basket ob lead!"

"Have they caught old Jordaneff?" Ruden asked.

"Yo' mean d' ol' Bulgary man? Yes—dey sho have. Mr. Gallagher hammer 'im wid d' butt ob his gun till 'e turn ober like a dead 'possum!"

"Where is he?"

"Lyin' ober dar 'mong d' dead wood. Mr. Gallagher sez—sez 'ee—"Let d' ol' sucker lie dar," sez 'ee—"ees fakin'!"

Sam had taken a liking to Ruden, and in addition to his own work, became his nurse. After supper Ruden's temperature rose rapidly, and Sam not knowing what to do, sought sympathy and help wherever he could find it.

Shandor, the interpreter, was a Hungarian. He entered the camp as a dish-washer, but later entered the office as a clerk and acted as interpreter. He was the scion of a noble Magyar family who had left home for his country's good, and after several weeks in the New York bread line, was drafted South with a gang of laborers. He was persuaded to look in on Ruden.

"No thank you," Ruden said in answer to his question; "you can do nothing for me—but there's Maginnis dying of typhoid beside me; you might help him!"

"You are a Magyar; I would like to help you!"

"I prefer Gallagher's help; you are a traitor to your race!"

"How do you make that out?"

"You have gone after your countrymen with bloodhounds and guns, and you have stood by like a coward

when they were flogged like galley slaves by these brutes. I am on a field of battle; I'll take help from the enemy—not from a traitor!”

“You can go to hell, then!” said the interpreter, as he turned to the Irishman.

“Hello, Joe, how are you?”

“Get out!” said Joe, “you’re a damned Dago; send me a nigger wid a dhrink ov wather, an’ t’hell wid yez!”

Shandor laughed and left the scene.

Two men carried Jordaneff into the shed. That was the only remedy the doctor offered when he came.

“Can I do anything for you?” he asked Ruden.

“If you were a physician, you might,” answered Ruden.

“You’ve got some gall for a dollar a day Sheeney, hain’t ye?”

“I’m too weak to talk much,” said Ruden; “but let me point out something of which you seem oblivious. That slimy pool where we get our drinking water contains not only slime, but the excrements of men and horses. Five men have been killed by it, and the sixth is dying beside me. You can’t save him—you haven’t the skill. Five hundred men pay fifty cents a month here for medical attendance, which consists of patent medicines and a quack.”

“What’s doin’ on th’ Bowery, Doc?” Gallagher broke in.

“This Sheeney needs more ov your medicine nor mine!” Tremble answered.

“Why th’ —— did ye take my pills out ov ’im, then?”

Ruden turned over exhausted. As soon as Sam saw the way clear, he came in and made him as comfortable as possible. Franz begged for a light. Sam stuck a

candle on a stump beside him. In low weak whispers Ruden told Sam to make a cross out of two small sticks and give it to Maginnis. It was a crude thing made with a hatchet on a chopping-block.

Outside, the lumber-Jacks sat around the camp fires, whites around one pile of blazing pine knots, and the blacks around another. The whites smoked, chewed and told smutty stories, punctuated with empty laughter. The blacks sang the songs of a slave race: they sang of liberty and associated it with another world; they sang of "home," but it was away off beyond the skies.

Joe Maginnis gripped tightly the hand of Sam in gratitude, and muttered feebly—"Hail Mary, Mother of God." Franz, by the light of his candle, read his "Meistershaftesbuch" for a few minutes; then he extinguished his candle and went to sleep,—a few minutes later Joe Maginnis said his last "Hail Mary," turned over on his back, and died. The last sounds of the night came from the negroes; it was soothing beyond words to the pain-racked body of Ruden:

"Swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' fur t' carry me home."

CHAPTER IX

“TILL ONE MAN IS DEAD OR OUT”

“PUT that Sheeney t’ work t’day,” Gallagher told Archie on the eighth morning after the shooting.

“What Sheeney?” asked Archie.

“Th’ one I put the holes in t’other day.”

“Gee—” Archie said, in a tone of doubt, “he’ll need galvanizing first; he looks like a ghost.”

“All Sheenies look like ghosts, an’ some of ’em Guineas look like ghosts wi’ th’ jaunders. Give ’im an axe an’ pack ’im off t’ th’ drift!”

Ruden sat on a log by the stable a few feet from the speakers. He arose, put his hand to his hip pocket, and produced a revolver.

“Gallagher,” he said, “when we arrived here, you told us that the Law was written in lead, and you gave us a hint that you both made and executed the Laws. Now since I’ve felt the force of what you told us, I have provided myself with a little Law on my own account.”

“Oh—that’s yer game, eh?”

“No, it’s yours—it’s your language—and I’ve been learning to speak it for a few days; and if you open up a conversation in that tongue again, there’ll be two talking instead of one!”

There was a quiet reserve in the man—an indefinable something above the common herd that Gallagher and Archie felt as they scrutinized him with mingled emotions.

“Hand in that gun, Sheeney, before supper, or we’ll put a few more holes in yer dirty hide—see?”

Ruden folded his arms and watched them. It was the dinner hour, and the teamsters lounged around the loose timber near the stable. The bosses held a whispered conference for a moment, then the voice of Archie rang out:

“Pull ’em out, boys!”

There was a commotion; then the jingling of harness and the heavy tread of horses’ feet as the teams were pulled out and jogged off to the pine drift for the afternoon. It was ten minutes before the hour, and Ruden knew that there was something in the air. He sat down again on the log and toyed with the gun that Sam had given him. He had made a mistake—he knew it instantly; but there was no help—he could not retreat. There was but one thing to do—leave the camp and defy detention!

Gallagher secretly cleared the camp, cleared it of everybody save the whipping crew, the blacksmith, Ollie, the head teamster, Archie and himself. A few minutes after the horses left, Gallagher, revolver in hand, advanced at a rapid pace toward Ruden. It was a ruse! Ruden arose and faced the little master. As he did so, he was seized from behind in the iron grip of the blacksmith. Gallagher wrenched the gun out of his hand and struck him over the head with the butt. He dropped to his knees—dazed.

The paradox of the situation was, not the defiance of Law or the ignorance of it, but the fact that apart from the business of denuding the forest, all these men possessed a certain human kindness found in all men if one digs deep enough to find it. Gallagher had a nature that wasn’t wholly brutal. Out of the woods he

could laugh; he could stand at the bar with a lumber-Jack as a comradeship that both gave and took. The blacksmith and Ollie were quiet, stolid men, who had no particular grudge against the foreigners, arriving daily. Archie was kind-hearted and had a smile as engaging and genuine as the smile of a schoolgirl. In a bunch, then, what possessed them?

A modern deity which, perhaps, at the very moment that Ruden was felled like an ox with the butt end of a revolver, was walking down Wall Street under a stove-pipe hat! The puppets of the forest are ruled from afar. An invisible whip held in a hand by the edge of the sea stings and smarts the human bodies in the bosom of the densest forest of the sunny South!

Ruden staggered to his feet again, pale and weak.

"Tie the sucker to the block and give him twenty!" Gallagher shouted, and his men obeyed. A rope was brought and his arms were bound to his sides. Archie shook his head dubiously, but Gallagher was aroused—no man had ever dared to dispute his sovereignty of the woods. Men had cried for mercy, others had promised obedience; this was a new type, and like a medieval monarch, Gallagher determined to put the screws on and watch the result. Ruden's silence irritated him. Other men argued, swore, threatened. He liked that—he was witty and enjoyed repartee.

"Go on, Archie!" he said, after a pause, "soak 'im!" Ollie handed his cowhide to the "whipping boss," and he brought it down on his victim's back with all the force of his arm.

"Come on, Archie, come on—make the pig squeal!" Gallagher yelled; but somehow the power had gone out of Archie's arm. He stood a minute, then looked at Gallagher who was livid with rage.

“This fellow’s half dead, Teddy,—he’ll drop!”

“Gettin’ chicken-hearted yerself, eh?”

Archie’s eyes flashed.

“Like to hev a turn yerself?” he asked Gallagher.

“Go on—I tell you!” Gallagher shouted at the top of his voice.

“T’ hell wi’ yer nigger drivin’!” said Archie, as he flung the cowhide into a corner. “I’ll whip a lazy man, but this ain’t no lazy man; he’s a damned sight better man than you are!”

Gallagher lost control. He lunged at Archie, missed him and lunged again. They clinched and fought like demons at short distance. They stumbled and fell, but they were smashing each other as they rolled over and over. They were both desperate men and were infuriated.

Ruden was so weak that he would have dropped, but the rope supported him. Sam suddenly appeared and ran his knife through the ropes, dropping Ruden to the ground, where he lay exhausted. Then he directed his attention to the men on the ground. Both men fumbled for guns. Sam’s eyes rolled, his mouth was wide open.

“Ah’ll be God blest if dey ain’t g’wine t’ shoot!” he said with a grin.

Ollie and the blacksmith seized a man each and dragged them apart. Gallagher’s face was covered with blood. He had gotten the worst of it and was panting for breath. The night watchman, asleep in his hut, had been aroused by the shouting and was quickly on the ground. He left and reappeared a few minutes later with a bottle of whisky for Gallagher.

“Gallagher—” said Archie, “before I leave this camp, I’ll knock the —— out of you!”

"You'll leave the camp all right—" Gallagher said, "and I'll give you a chance to do the other; put up your gun."

"Put up yours!"

Each man handed his gun to the man by his side.

"Knives, too!" said Archie—and the knives were handed over.

"Now let's strip and finish it!" Archie said.

Ruden sat up—leaned against a log, and watched the proceedings.

"When dey wade inter each oder, boss," Sam whispered, "take a sneak; here's anoder gun t' keep d' mosquitoes away!"

The men stripped naked to the waist. Ollie stood behind Gallagher, and the blacksmith seconded Archie. The news had reached the drift, and before they began, fifty men stood around the fighters. Ruden was utterly forgotten. Work was at a standstill. The crowd was beside itself with glee. Not a man in the camp had any particular love for either. Most of the men hated both.

"Two minute rounds?" asked Ollie.

"Two minute—hell!" Gallagher shouted. "This is a fight to the death—rough and tumble till one man is dead or out!"

At it they went—hammer and tongs—"thud—smash—thud!"

Ruden moved away, slowly at first, but as he entered the pines, he gathered all his strength and moved as rapidly as it would allow him. When half a mile away, he could hear the yells of the crowd. They grew fainter and fainter; and then he was alone in the gloom of the forest road. The sound of wheels behind startled him. He trembled with fear. Like a hunted animal he shot

into the woods and watched the vehicle pass. It was a farmer, and he might have had a lift by the way if he had kept his course. He stopped for a minute and examined the second gun Sam had given him. Every chamber was full. He re-entered the road and walked another mile. He had almost reached his limit, when another sound of wheels was heard. This time he walked on as if he were unconcerned. As the buggy passed him, he called to the driver and asked for a lift. It was Justice Johnson, the notary public, employed by the Blockheart Lumber Company to try its cases. Ruden had seen him in camp, and knew him.

“Ain’t ye one o’ them Sheenies at the camp?” old Johnson asked.

“Yes,” Ruden said—“I have been up there, but I’ve been under the doctor’s care for some time and am completely knocked out.”

“Ye luk it,” Johnson said dryly. “Did ye say good-bye t’ Teddy?”

“No, I didn’t,” Ruden said, “he was a mighty busy man when I left!”

“Got a receipt fur yer fare down?” asked the Judge, as he changed the tobacco ball from one jaw to the other.

“No—I haven’t. As I tell you, I’ve been very ill ever since I came.”

“Ah reckon as we’d better go back an’ say good-bye t’ Teddy,” he said, as he pulled up the old horse. The Judge saw a ten dollar fee for the capture and his court fee besides, and he wasn’t a man to let business go begging in that kind of a way, especially when his only excuse for the journey to town was to file some papers at the county seat—a trifle he could attend to any day.

“I shall have to part company with you, Judge!”

"Stay right whar ye sit," Johnson said.

Ruden got out of the buggy. Johnson pulled his gun and pointed it at Ruden.

"Ye kin go back alive or dead—jest as ye hev a mind!"

Ruden entered the buggy again and as the old man was fumbling with the reins, he seized the revolver and twisted it out of his hand; then he got out and entered the woods, watching the old Judge from behind a tree. He turned the horse toward the camp, and drove back at full gallop.

Ruden had one hope left—a farm house—so he quickened his pace. In half an hour he was out of the woods, in an open country. The road was on the side of a hill, and about a mile off down the valley, he saw a clump of trees and a red barn. He left the road and headed for the place.

"Madam," Ruden said to the woman who came to the door, "in the name of Christ, I ask permission to lie down and rest—I can go no further!"

"Ain't ye one o' them New York Jews what's makin' so much trouble at th' camp up there?"

"No, I'm not a Jew—I'm not a trouble-maker; but even if I were, wouldn't you, for the sake of Christ, let me lie down in your barn and rest?" he said.

"We're Baptises—" she said, "'hard shell,' as they call us, but the Bloekheart people give us a load o' lumber onct in a while and us kin't afford t' keep a hotel t' harbor them loafers what robs the company."

"I suppose," Ruden said in a soft tone, "that for that occasional load of lumber they rather expect you to keep a watch for travelers; is that it?"

"Ah reckon that's jest about th' size o' it."

"I was going to ask you for a cup of water, but as I

have not been baptised by immersion, I suppose that also would be against your principles?”

“Well, it’s jest as I was sayin’; th’ company’s mighty good t’ us small holders here, an’ we kin’t afford t’ disobleege thim. That’s jest how th’ thing stands; Baptises or no Baptises, neighbors is neighbors!”

“Good day,” he said, as he shuffled away from the door.

A few hundred yards from the house was another road, and along the road, within a few minutes’ walk, a house. He repeated his question and had a better reception. His eyes were sunken and the deathlike pallor on his thin face was quickly observed by the woman of the house.

“I have one here already,” she said, “but you look dead—come in.”

As he entered, he saw a figure crouching by a window in a corner of the room, reading. Another instant and the arms of the figure were around Ruden’s neck.

“Szerusz Baratom!” It was Franz who had also taken advantage of the fight to escape. Tired out, he begged for rest, and was now perusing his “Vade Mecum”—his Meistershaftesbuch!

“Where’s your baggage, Franz?” Ruden asked.

He clapped his hand on an inside pocket—“Das ist alles!” It contained his diplomas!

The woman watched the comrades with great interest, but kept an anxious lookout for her husband, whom she expected at any moment. Ruden relieved her by saying:

“We hope to reach Pensacola to-morrow morning, so just as soon as we are a little rested, we will move on.”

When the husband arrived, he looked the strangers over suspiciously.

"Ain't you the Jew what was caught be th' Block-heart hounds t'other day?"

Ruden answered for Franz—"Yes—" he said, "this boy had a contract with them, and they broke it."

"Contract?" the man said in surprise. "White men hev no contracts; it's niggers what hev 'em down here, an' they ain't no damned good fur niggers, nuther!"

Ruden offered to pay for supper, but the man shook his head.

"No," he said, "us kin't swell th' chorus in no church; us ain't what ye'd eall Christians eggsactly, but t' take money from a man in trouble for a mouthful o' vittuals wud be some'at like takin' pennies from a blind man!"

There was a quality in Ruden's voice that held these white crackers awe-struck. It was a voice full of pathos at times,—at others, it was musical; but at this particular time it was full of tears.

The supper of corn pone, molasses and goat's milk was a luxury to the Magyars. When the things were cleared away, Ruden said:

"Good friends, we may have an opportunity some day to show you how grateful we are for your kindness to us; but before we go, I would like to say a word or two on a subject you brought up just now. You said you did not belong to a church—but you do! You are both members of the church that Jesus organized when he said, 'Other sheep have I which are not of this fold.' I am a minister of the gospel, and in the name of Christ, I pronounce you both members of the Church Universal—of the Church of the Deed."

At the announcement, the three people stood on their feet and bowed their heads. Ruden also arose, and continued—"To the head of that Church, let us pray!" All four knelt on the rough pine boards—but the prayer of dedication was drowned in the yelping of dogs. The old man quietly arose, took down his shotgun, and peeped through a crack of the door.

"Sorry t' shet off th' only prayers ever bin spoke in this ranch, stranger," he said quietly, "but the bloodhouns are at th' door!"

It was not yet dark and Ruden could see the men behind the hounds. There were three of them, and as his first thought was for the house that sheltered him, he said:

"Friend, sit down here with your wife, and we will do the rest."

The man obeyed, and Ruden and Franz surrendered themselves to Deputy Sheriff Moniky and his posse.

"The blessing of God to you," he said, as he kissed their hands in farewell.

CHAPTER X

THE UNDERWORLD OF THE STOCKADE

THE trial of Ruden in a District Court of Southern Alabama was one of the most spectacular legal proceedings ever seen in the South. The accused was his own lawyer and proved to the crowded courtroom that he had no fool for a client. His cross-examination of witnesses lasted two days. It was thorough and astonished the legal talent. In his summing up he spoke for three hours. The "Turpentine Bunch," as the interests were called, controlled the court, selected the jury, and before the case was called, had decided on a sentence. It was a waste of time for the jury to retire. They were out twelve minutes. It took that time to call the roll and cast a single ballot.

"There undoubtedly have been circumstances of a most provoking nature," the judge said, in pronouncing sentence, "but the law of the land must be maintained. I sentence you to a year and a day in the State Penitentiary at Bratt City, and I hope the lesson will not be lost on the irresponsible laborers who come here to earn a living."

"Your honor," said Ruden, "I will see that the lesson is not lost. I go as a galley-slave, not to punishment for a crime, but as a cog in your wheel of production in the South. I am going to a mine to dig coal and swell the fortune of some vulgar parasite; but if you will pardon the suggestion as I leave the Court—I have to-day fired the first shot in a campaign that

will never end until every white slave in the South has the shackles torn from his limbs!" He wheeled around and pointed his finger at the United States Commissioner. "Mr. Marsh," he said, "you are a gentleman—you have a soul and a conscience. I charge you in the name of God and of the people of the United States to use your prerogative to stamp out peonage—the white slavery of the Twentieth Century; to stamp it out in your district, where it flourishes in its most aggravated form!"

He could have talked an hour. The court was intensely interested, and when he finished, said:

"I think it unfortunate that such an intellect should fester in the stripes of a convict."

Bratt City is a little town of old whitewashed shacks surrounded by a board fence ten feet high, and guarded by armed guards who live night and day in square sentry boxes built on the fence in such a position as to command a view of the entire enclosure. In the center, surrounded by a screen of wooden fretwork, is the mouth of the mine in which the inhabitants spend their days. In a corner at the east end stands the little hospital, and near it, the kennel of the bloodhounds. Outside the fence stood immense dark culm heaps towering above the buildings, and beside them the machinery, with the tall black chimney overtopping all. Nothing more dismal could be imagined. There was a population of one thousand, two hundred of whom were whites; the rest were blacks and women. Each group quartered separately. The shack which quartered the white men was called, "cell number one"—by the inmates—simply as "one." "Nigger cell" designated the home of the blacks, and "woman's place" the cell of the

score or more of women, white and black. Each department branched off from a central point where the guards and deputies lounged and where the warden's office commanded a view of the entrance to each cell. Although the office occupied but a small corner, the entire place was called "the office."

The name—"Bratt City"—satisfied the inhabitants of the straggling houses outside, but the place was known as "the stockade." Handcuffed to a murderer, Ruden was led from the railroad station to the stockade.

"Twenty an' a one—hey—that's all, is it?" exclaimed the warden, as they were led into the office. "Take 'em over to Doc. an' bring 'em back," he said to a deputy.

"First-class—" said the medical man, as they stood in front of him, "first-class both!" he repeated; and they were taken back to have a clerk take their pedigrees and fit them out in stripes.

Ruden wasn't "fitted" with stripes; he was handed a striped suit and told to "git into 'em." Then he was escorted to "one." The convicts were still in the mine and the big barnlike room was empty. On each side were cots suspended from the ceiling, twenty-five on a side, and made to accommodate two each. About six P. M. the mine disgorged its human misery; and as each man came in, he had a look at the newcomers.

"Hello, Cap!" one man said, "sorry to see yer."

"Sorry, too, ain't ye!" said the man close behind the speaker. A tall, lithe Southerner stopped for a moment and looked him over.

"Hello, professor," he said, "new line for you—so?"

"Yes—very new," Ruden replied, languidly.

They had come through the washroom on the way to "one," but they were still black with coal dust. One striped suit—his own—deepened the furrows on his forehead; a mass of them hurt his mind!

A long bar of iron suspended from the office ceiling, when struck with a hickory stick, called the men to supper. The sound startled Ruden—penetrated his being like the sting of an asp. The men rushed to the door and awaited the opening by an invisible hand. A few remained—he discovered later that they were too tired to eat and had the privilege to abstain. In fifteen minutes they were back; then a crowd gathered around Ruden and the murderer, and started an inquiry.

"Yank, ain't ye?" one asked Ruden.

"American," he answered.

"Born in this country?"

"Yes, but I was born of foreign parents," Ruden added. "How long does the light burn?" he asked, as he looked toward the dim electric bulb in the center of the room.

"Till nine."

They asked what he had committed, and when he told them, they laughed and swore, and called it a "nigger's crime." Nine-tenths of the white men in "one" were from the South, and every man in the place had a soubriquet. A dull leaden sensation gripped Ruden. At times he perspired—then he shivered as if in a chill. The sights, the sounds, the laughter—all racked his nerves. It was as if a rough hand had torn away the strings of a finely tuned harp.

The man to whom he had been manacled most of the day was his bed-fellow. He was a man about forty-five, with a strong, quiet face, who watched the pro-

ceedings with indifference, and answered questions by a nod or a wave of the hand. He was of more interest because of the nature of his crime; but the men, finding him silent and often morose, took little pains to draw him out.

About half-past eight most of the men were in bed. Two lingered by the table under the bulb for a while. When they shuffled off to their corner, the door deputy entered. Of all the sounds Ruden had heard, none smote him with such pain as the clanking of chains as the deputy manacled a dozen men to the wall by the ankles. It was special treatment for a special class. The chains dangled against the wall beside every bed. Ruden and his companion were moved by the same impulse at the same time to examine theirs—and a cold shiver ran through them both as they saw a probable situation for themselves. A few men on the cots nearest the lights, a coveted situation, read; one, an old magazine, and the other—a bundle of old letters. They lay on the cot next to Ruden's. From the cot to the window, they had extemporized a clothesline—a piece of string on which was pinned two handkerchiefs. Between the handkerchiefs, there was a space of three inches. The man reading the old letters tied them in a bundle and stuffed them beneath his mattress. The magazine dropped to the floor. Ruden lay on his side watching the men.

"Say—" said the man of the magazine, "see that fly?"

"Where?"

"Between th' nose rags!"

"Yep."

"See th' 'skeeter' beside 'im?"

"Yep."

“Ah’ll bet ye a ton o’ coal th’ fly gits a move on fust!”

“Ah’m on,” said the man of the letters.

The black house-fly paraded back and forth on his end of the space. He circled the string—the mosquito followed suit. Ruden was engrossed. He watched the clothesline intently for a minute or two with such interest that his mind flitted from the fly and the mosquito to the boulder at Brook Farm. The fly advanced into the mosquito’s territory, and the mosquito backed up on the edge of the handkerchief. Ruden felt a warm glow sweep through his body—in the kingdom of his mind came a comrade whose face had followed him through every exigency since the night he left the farm for the labor fields of the South. The fly returned to his original position, and the mosquito timidly followed at a distance. The light went out.

“When do we cash in?” asked the magazine man.

“‘Lone Star,’”—said the bundle of letters man, “Ah’m at yer mercy, but Ah’ll trust ye; Ah left th’ nose rags an’ th’ fly some time ago. Ah don’t know which or who made th’ fust break.”

“Damned ef Ah know nuther!” said “Lone Star.”

“Then it’s a draw!”

“Call it a tie!”

“‘Kentuck,’” said “Lone Star,” “Ah’ll swap memories wi’ ye! What trail did ye hit when ye left the clothesline?”

“Waal, it were a long trail—‘Lone Star’—a long trail leadin’ to m’ home place—a bit of a village called Arden—Ah jest meandered down there in m’ mind t’ see the folks.”

“Anyone sort of special?” asked the listener.

“Not thar,” said “Kentuck”—“but on the next

trip there wuz—she was—waal, Ah reckon Ah'll quit. Whar did *you* go, 'Lone Star?' "

"Yer not on th' level, 'Kentuck'; ye quit th' trail when the game's in sight. Go on, mate, ye've given th' introduction—give's the story now! Ye wont go on?"

"If ye hold th' scent till Sunday, Ah'll tote ye along an' introduce ye."

"Waal," said "Lone Star," "mine was a pig trail compared t' yourn. It led me down through the tall dog fennel t' Montgomery County whar we lived whin th' trouble arrived."

"What'd ye do whin ye got that?"

"Same as you—Ah visited the folks."

"Anyone special?"

"Yep."

"An ol' flame, eh?"

"No, m' little gal—she wuz three whin her mother died—that wuz whin Ah come here—seventeen year agone."

"Who keeps yer gal?"

"Her granny."

"Kentuck" gave a long sigh. Ruden was on the point of an interjection when "Lone Star" said:

"Something hes gone wrong down there—every time Ah open the bundle, her last letter drops out or is on top. Ah feel mighty d——d desperate t' hev a real look in some time!"

The light was turned on and the heavy tread of the warden was heard marching along the center of the cell.

"'Kentuck,'" he said, "git out here!"

"Kentuck" and "Lone Star" were on the floor instantly.

"Colonel—" said "Lone Star," "Ah'm th' transgressor this time. Ah chewed th' rag t' 'Kentuck' ever since th' douse o' th' glim! Ah'll take whatever's comin'!"

The warden was a tall, slim man, with large nose, a weak, purple-lipped mouth and the eyes of a mouse. He eyed the men as they stood before him. Every man in "one" was watching the proceedings.

"He's a liar!" said "Kentuck." "Give me what's comin'—it's up t' me."

"String up 'Lone Star'!" the warden said to his deputy. The cuffs were attached to his wrists, and he was tied to an iron ring in the center of the ceiling, his hands above his head.

The light went out again, all was quiet—quiet as the grave, save an occasional sigh from the sleepless or those in pain.

Ruden couldn't sleep. He was in mental agony throughout the night—the night that seemed a week to him. About an hour after the stringing up of "Lone Star," "Kentuck" crept over to his mate, stealthily as a cat and with the strength of a lion, he picked up the table and placed it beside the man in pain. "Lone Star" got on top and rested. "Kentuck" stretched himself on it and went to sleep, but before the first streak of dawn or the first footfall of the deputies, the table was cleared away again, and "Lone Star" hung limp and exhausted from what the convicts called "the bull ring."

At half-past four a deputy in each department aroused the community—aroused it to work. Ruden joined the march to the dining-room for the first time. Hogs in Alabama are like turnips in Scotland—they are held in common. Hogs run wild, and all one has

to do is to go out into the tall dog fennel and help himself. Pork and beans, therefore, are the staple diets of all penitentiaries and stockades. There were two meals a day at Bratt City. They consisted of bread, beans and pork. On Sunday there was a change of meat.

Ruden could not eat, but he took part of the meal to the mine, as did others. The striped suit felt like a garment of woven wire as he brushed it against the men in line. They went in squads—black squads and white. At every turn, every corner, every change—stood the armed guards, white men all, with the slouch hat and the slouching gait—crackers—“white trash,” who were content with small pay and the mental stimulus to their jaded lives that the handling of a shotgun gave them. The striped procession crowded into the mine head. Then the “skip,” an iron cage on wheels was ready, and Ruden squeezed between two negroes went in the first load.

Down, down the dark shaft of the mine jerked and bumped the “skip” with its human cargo. The shaft was pitch dark save as the tiny lamp on each man’s forehead lit it up in passing. Ruden looked behind for a moment and saw the faint light at the mine head. What a crowd of thoughts rushed madly through his brain as he watched it! Dimmer and smaller it became as the “skip” went down, and fainter and fainter the sound of the machinery at the starting point. The “skip” stopped at a pocket of the shaft, and unloaded. Ruden saw the men move silently to their places. They looked like fireflies in the black mist, for only the flickering, smoky lamps could be seen a few yards away. An invisible power moved the skip. It began the ascent for its second load.

"D'ye know what yer up agin'?" asked a "slope boss."

"No," Ruden said, as he pointed to the murderer, "we've just arrived."

"Fust class—ain't ye?"

"Yes; that's what the doctor said."

The boss grinned and said, "Ye pull out five tons a day an' git it up thar or hev yer hide tanned; that's what fust class means!"

"Pike!" he roared, and a deputy answered. "Show these fellers th' game!"

Ten minutes later the two men were battling with black rocks. They pooled their interests and began the task of producing ten earloads together. The work went hard, of course. Their hands bled; their legs were chipped and bleeding. The coats came off first; then their shirts and undershirts—and they were uniform with the underground population. The black coal dust first blackened them, and then as it penetrated their mouths, throats and lungs, it kept them coughing and spitting incessantly. The guards stood by, rolling their quids from side to side of their mouths, and toying with their guns. The white men were silent, dogged. The blacks joked quietly and hummed plantation melodies as they worked. One thing only was required below the surface of the earth—coal; and a Negro can only produce by song—melody is an essential accompaniment to all forms of black labor. At noontime a signal was given, and the men lay down in their tracks and panted for breath. They stretched themselves on their backs and ate the fat pork—ate it like beasts, clawing it from tin cans.

CHAPTER XI

“THOUGH I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, BEHOLD THOU ART THERE.”

RUDEN'S fastidiousness vanished. The labor sucked the blood out of his veins and drained his vitality. He felt an insatiable craving for liquor—any kind of liquor. He ate like the others—as ravenously, as slovenly, and with his dirty coal black fingers. It seemed but a mouthful—it was, indeed—and to wash it down there was coffee, brown thin coffee, and water. Five minutes after the dinner sound, half-a-dozen banjos broke the stillness. They were in different pockets of the mine, and accompanying, as many different melodies. At noontime the first day a year looked like twenty to Ruden; but beside him worked men who as “first class” had pulled out five tons of coal a day for fifteen years. Love of life was large in them, so they worked at the point of a shotgun rather than revolt and die. At half-past four the “slope boss” warned Ruden that there was but half-an-hour in which to get the last carload. Like demons they worked with pick and shovel—with bloody, sweaty bodies, with blistered faces and calloused hands. Before the last shovelful was on the car, the men were leaving the mine. Ruden and his companion came up in the last load. They scarcely had strength to stand. There were a dozen men in the load, and as they stood packed closely together, black and white blowing their hot breath into each other's faces, the color line was effaced. The sound of the hick-

ory stick on the bar of iron had a different meaning that night. Hunger pushed him into line for the dining-room. The color line was sharply drawn at the tables. The supper was composed of grits—boiled corn—coffee and bread. Each man cleared his plate in less than five minutes.

At a desk in the center of the room sat the warden with a big book in front of him in which was recorded the day's work of the stockade. A rap on the desk with his pencil brought the room from silence to awe.

“Jones, Hopkins, Davis, Jenkins!” he called out deliberately—slowly.

Ruden was about to ask why the names were called, but the fate of “Lone Star” was too fresh in his mind to allow him to meet trouble half way. As the procession marched out, a deputy caught Ruden by the shoulder and pushed him into a corner with four others.

“What's this for?” Ruden asked in an undertone.

“Dish-washing,” he was told.

In less than a minute the room was cleared, save two small groups—one called by the warden, the other pushed into a corner to wash up after the meal. Ruden was given three tables to clear, but the movements of the warden were of too sensational a character not to be watched by every man left in the room. He took from a box hanging on the wall behind his desk a long leather thong of rawhide. Then he removed his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeves and prepared to flog the men. They were white men, and one of them, Jenkins, was “Lone Star.” Ruden could scarcely believe the sight of his eyes. Jones was flogged first. He lay down flat on his stomach, and, without a groan, received fifteen cuts on the back. Hopkins got twenty-one in about

the same manner. After the fifteenth, he writhed some and groaned. Davis got ten. "Lone Star" was ordered to strip. When naked to the waist and ready, the warden said:

"Jenkins—Ah'm only goin' ter give ye twenty-one on th' naked, but ye're gittin' rather glib wi' yer clapper lately and oughter hev more!"

"Warden—" said "Lone Star," "Ah've pulled out more coal here nor any man in th' place. Ah've bin on th' level wi' th' game all these years, an' all Ah've got t' say now is that yer term's up nex' fall and Ah've got six more months t' go—"

"That's sorter considerate o' ye, 'Lone Star,' an' jest t' show ye m' appreciation, Ah'll give ye ten exray for th' suggestion!"

Down went "Lone Star" on his stomach and up went the long arm of Gordon, the warden, with the venomous rawhide in his iron grip. Thirty-one times it fell with terrible force on the bare back of the convict. After the twentieth the body twisted a little at each stroke, for the flesh was lacerated and bloody. The writhing increased, and for a moment the proceedings stopped.

"Sam!" shouted the warden, "git down on 'im!"

A big negro reluctantly sat down on "Lone Star's" shoulders, pinning him to the floor.

"Bud!" he shouted to another black man, "down on 'im!" and the second man sat down on his legs. Then, as if some demon possessed him, the warden wielded the bloody lash until his deputy called out—

"Thirty-one!"

The Africans bounded to their feet, but the Saxon lay still.

"Th' sucker didn't feel them last five," the war-

den said, “he oughter hev them for breakfast to-morrer.”

Four men picked up “Lone Star,” put him in a blanket and carried him to “one,” where “Kentuck” washed him with the cell drinking water and covered his wounds with a section of a shirt donated by Ruden’s bed-fellow.

Three nights a week the Chaplain held a two hours’ session of a night school, and as Ruden could do nothing to add to the comfort of “Lone Star,” he went upstairs to the “Chapel” with a dozen of the men from “one.” He found a dozen whites and two dozen blacks rather availing themselves of the extra hours’ freedom and light than of the facilities to improve their education.

The Chaplain was a man under forty, a man of tender sympathies, intense zeal and medieval theology. The Chapel looked like a hayloft—the walls were white-washed and decorated with chromos and blackboards. The first hour was given to arithmetic, reading and writing; the second, to a religious service. Ruden offered himself as a teacher for the first hour. Jim Whitecotton was his first pupil.

“How far have you gotten, Jim?” he asked.

“Ah know de letters ob mah name, but bless gracious ef Ah kin string ’em t’gedder so’s ye’d know ’em.”

“Well, ‘Jim’ is easy.”

“It sho is: ‘J’ is like de ol’ whip Ah uster hev; ‘I’ is like mah ol’ man’s cane down side up, an’ ‘M’ is a pig’s tail.”

“Do you think of all those things every time you write the word, ‘Jim’?”

“Ah sho do!”

Jim had served twenty years in the stockade, and for three of them at the night school, he had wrestled with the letters of his name. He was the best banjo player in the place, and on several occasions the Chaplain had used him as a soloist.

"What are you here for?" Ruden asked.

"De crime, yo' mean?"

"Yes."

"Murder, boss—cold blood murder—least Ah think his blood wuz cold."

"Why did you kill him!"

"He come a-monkeyin' aroun' mah wife; he sho did, an' Ah give 'im fair warnin' twice't. He wuz a preacher, too—he sho wuz! Ah say—'Mister parson, ef yo' come der agin, Ah'll bore a hole in yo; Ah sho will!'"

"Why didn't they hang you, Jim?"

"Yo've got me, boss; dey didn't hev enough rope, Ah reckon," he said, grinning.

"Why aren't you a trustie, Jim?"

"Ah hev bin, boss; but de temptations am too big! Ah make a break fo' de woods whin Ah git a chanet—Ah sho do!"

Jim was in the midst of a most intricate explanation of the way he tried to remember the order of the letters in the word, "Whitecotton," when the Chaplain introduced another pupil to Ruden. He was a young fellow of thirty and for burglary and assault had been sentenced one hundred years on the first count, and forty on the second. He was the longest of the long term men, and was pointed out to visitors as the "double-lifer." He liked the look of Ruden, and asked the Chaplain if he might take some lessons from him.

"What can I teach you?" asked Ruden.

“There’s only one thing worth learning here,” he said, “and that is—how to escape!”

“And the next best thing?”

“Is how to endure the lack of such teaching!”

There was a refinement about the desperado that was not only attractive, but positively fascinating. His English was faultless, and his manners those of a man of culture.

“You’ve traveled?” Ruden ventured.

“Yes—I was abroad several years. I finished at Berlin.”

“A degree, you mean?”

“Yes!”

“How came you to get so far down?”

“‘Down’ is a comparative term,” said the man.

“That’s true—” Ruden said, as he thought of his own case.

“My people lost all they had in a corner in wheat, and I was left without position or money. I endured for a year, and then, in desperation, I took what I wanted—took it as it had been taken from me! I did it repeatedly, and landed here. Did you see ‘Lone Star’ whipped to-night?”

“Yes, the most brutal thing I ever saw! Not one man in a million would believe that in the Twentieth Century white men, Anglo-Saxons, are being flogged like slaves by the thousand.”

“And about the same percentage don’t care a — whether there are as many flogged or not.”

“That may be so.”

“That is so!”

“You hope, then, to escape?”

“Yes—four fellows in ‘one’ have been digging a tunnel for a year.”

“Where?”

“In a pocket of the mine; six months more and they will come out half a mile from here.”

“If they are not caught!”

“If they are not caught, as you say; but I am going to give them a chance to escape before they finish their tunnel.”

“How?”

“Just keep your eyes open!”

“It would be difficult to close them here!”

“Not as difficult as you imagine. There is paralysis in the air here. A month brutalizes most men who come here. Many who escape brutalization, die of a broken heart; and of those who escape both, tuberculosis gets a very large share.”

The Chaplain called the students to order for the service. It was simple, sincere and archaic. A few hymns, a few prayers and a talk—a talk directed largely at the latest arrival in order to prepare his mind for the personal appeal which was sure to follow. There was a word of appeal to Jack Brewster, the “double-lifer,” who sat beside Ruden. Brewster shook his head. The Chaplain smiled and tried again. Brewster said:

“Parson, I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but I must say that of all the satire on life I see around me here, nothing is half as satirical as the motto on these prison association buttons. The angels must laugh as they read the buttons on a convict’s breast: ‘All for Jesus!’ That ought to be changed to read, ‘All for the Genessee Coal and Iron Company!’ One could understand that! The State of Alabama—pardon me—I did not intend to talk, Dr. Hill—pardon me.”

“Go on, Brewster, it will do you good to unload;

and it may do us good to hear you,” the Chaplain said.

“That’s generous of you, sir; we do a lot of talking in these meetings on things of no particular interest to anyone.”

“Make it ‘some,’ not ‘a lot,’ ” remarked the Chaplain, smiling.

“‘Some,’ then. Now, here’s a clipping from an Alabama paper that came here last week. It’s a report by the president of the convict board. He says: ‘I am more convinced than ever before that the ideas of humanity and civilization would be better served and carried out if the torch were applied to every jail in Alabama. It would be more humane to stake the prisoner out with a ring around his neck like a wild animal than to confine him in places we call jails that are reeking with filth and disease, and alive with vermin of all kinds. They are not only harbingers of disease, but nurseries of death.’ Now, Parson, it takes courage to say that in Alabama. The State makes three quarters of a million dollars out of us each year by selling us body and soul to the highest bidder. In this place men are murdered by the rawhide, by tuberculosis—by other diseases, due to filth, lack of food and lack of sanitation. Alabama being the most religious State of the Union, sends you here to save our souls—to make us contented with hell and lick the lash that cuts our flesh to ribbons! All the men here love you personally, Dr. Hill; but surely you know the atmosphere is one of hatred—surely you know that the State is the modern whited sepulchre; don’t you?”

“There is some truth in what you say, Brewster, but you lay too much importance on the present life. This life is brief; there is an eternity beyond, and the question we have to settle some time or other is whether

we shall spend that eternity with God or the Devil—in heaven or in hell.”

After the meeting the Chaplain laid his hand tenderly, almost caressingly, on Ruden’s shoulder, and said:

“My brother—how do you stand related to this great question?”

“I will tell you,” answered Ruden, “when I know how you stand related to a bigger question—how you are related to the crime of murder as it is committed in this institution of which you are Chaplain?”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Then you are more ignorant than I thought you were.”

“I suppose you mean conditions in general!”

“Yes—and conditions in partieuular, too!”

“For instance?”

“Overwork, underfeeding, whipping, filth, vermin and disease!”

“Well, of course, the situation is bad; but I don’t see how I can help it.”

“You would lose your appointment if you tried, perhaps—is that it?”

“Well, to be frank, I probably would.”

“Then we may learn from each other. I also am a minister of the gospel.”

CHAPTER XII

JIM WHITECOTTON'S LAST LOAD

BREWSTER became a regular pupil of Ruden's at the night school. Ruden at each session put a problem on the board. Brewster solved it, and the rest of the time they talked and compared notes. Jim Whitecotton worked on the board next to them, and Ruden gave him an occasional hint in stringing together the letters of his name. Next to Whitecotton stood a yellow-skinned boy of fifteen, serving a twenty-year sentence. He was half-witted, and old Whitecotton had promised the boy's mother to be kind to him. The fourth session of the school that Ruden attended, he overheard a conversation between Whitecotton and the boy. The boy had been sent out alone to a gang of convicts, working on the country road, and was telling Whitecotton about it.

"An' dey didn't put no chains on yo' anklets?"

The boy shook his head.

"Honey," the old man said, "de nex' time yo' git a chancee like dat, mend yo' licks an' git somewhar—does yo' heeah?"

Next day the simpleton took the old man's advice, but failed in its execution. He was captured and returned to the stockade. When questioned, he told the warden that "Uncle Jim" had told him to go. Whitecotton was called.

"Did you tell th' kid t' go?" the warden asked him.

"Marse Wahden—Ah done gone try dat trick till yo've peeled de black hide orf mah bones. Do one rabbit tell anoder how ter git trapp't?"

"Nigger—did you tell 'im ter go?" he roared.

The old man shook, and began to whimper.

"Lordy, Lordy, Oh mah Lordy," he whined, "Ah done gone wish nobody no hahm!"

The warden smashed him on the side of the head, and he went sprawling on the floor; then he went over and dealt him a vicious kick on the abdomen. The old man doubled up in agony.

"Kick me on de head, Marse Wahden, so Ah wont feel de oders!"

Two deputies hurried the old man to his cell. When the delinquent roll was called at supper time, White-cotton headed the list. He had received more stripes than any man in the prison, and it was supposed by the warden and deputies that he had a thicker hide; so his ability to stand punishment became more of a gauge in his whippings than his infractions of the rules. That night he got fifty lashes; at least, the warden flogged him to that extent, but the negro who sat on him said he felt nothing after the fortieth. Next morning the old man could scarcely stand on his feet. With the help of Big Tom, his partner in the mine, he managed to get his clothes on and hobble down to breakfast with the others.

"Ye ain't gwine ter take no banjo dis trip, Jim, is yo'?" Tom asked.

"Deed Ah am. Ah'd be dead for sho befo' night ef Ah didn't hev 'er aroun'!" So, with his banjo slung around his shoulders, he took his place at the breakfast table; but he was unable to eat.

"Go see de doctah!" Tom urged.

"What's de use?" Jim asked.

"Go on, yo' ol' fool; yo' neber know what's gwine t' hit yo' tell yo'r hut!"

"Marse Wahden—" whined Jim, "Ah wants ter see de doctah dis morn."

"Ye do, hey? Waal, ye'll see 'im an' feel 'im, too!"

Ruden had been detailed to help carry a case to the dispensary, and was there when old Jim came in.

"Hello, Whitecotton!" the medical man said, "play-in' 'possum again?"

"Ah ain't playin' no 'possum, doctah," Jim said; "Ah'm putty nigh all in."

"Where has the lazy bug stung ye this time?"

"Marse Wahden hes done broke some'at in me innards, doctah—he sho hes!" He described the pains.

The physician laughed—"Go on, Jim,—git!"

"Ain't ye gwine t' giv' us some'at?" Jim whined.

"He was kicked, doctor," Ruden broke in, "and got fifty lashes last night. His shirt is glued to his back with blood. For God's sake, help the old fellow!"

The doctor looked open-mouthed at the speaker.

"Oh, you're the smart guy just arrived, are you?"

"I appeal to you as a man, doctor."

"I never saw the Northerner yet who didn't think he knew more about niggers than we Southerners do who live with them."

"This isn't a question of race, doctor. If this was a horse or a dog or a pig, I would appeal for pity, for consideration!"

"Give me that horsewhip!" the doctor called to an attendant. "Now, then, Jim, here's the medicine you need for 'possum disease!" and he curled the lash around Whitecotton's legs.

A look of unutterable hopelessness came into the negro's face. His eyes rolled. It was probably the only spark of resentment he had ever shown, and the doctor was as quick to catch its meaning as Ruden.

"See that?" he yelled. "Just beneath the skin of every nigger you find the beast!" He rushed at Jim, knocked him down, and kicked him twice, shouting—"Get up, nigger, and get to work!"

The sight maddened Ruden. In his convict's stripes he rushed between the doctor and his victim on the floor.

"For God's sake—" the sentence was cut short by the butt of the whip, as the doctor smashed it across his face. Another instant and the whip had changed hands, and its owner was appealing at the top of his voice for help. When Ruden got possession of the whip, he threw it in a corner and put the owner on the defensive with his fists.

"You cowardly cur!" he said, "you can beat an old man to death, but when you face a man, you play the baby and squeal for help."

"Hand me that revolver!" yelled the doctor to his assistant.

Ruden rushed at him, caught him by the collar and whirled him into the center of the room.

"Hold up your hands!" he said, as he made another rush—this time to punish him if it were in his power or at least divert the doctor's attention.

There was little time, however, for he was seized by a couple of deputies from behind and led away to the warden. He was heavily shackled with iron chains around the ankles, and led to the mine. Meantime, Whitecotton had been bundled out of the dispensary to his coal pocket below. Big Tom wept over the old man's condition, as he poured oil over his back to keep the shirt from sticking to it.

"Poh ol' Jim!" he said, "yo' stick in this yer cornah an' Ah'll do de trick foh de two on us."

After awhile Jim took up his banjo and began to thrum it.

"Nigger," said the "slope boss," "put up that ar tin kittle o' yourn right away!"

"Boss deputy," Tom said, "give de poh ol' niggah a show; do, like a good kind boss what yo' is, an' yo'll see Big Tom mend 'is licks an' whip out ten cyars o' coal befo' dese oder fellahs git out five. Ah sho will, boss, ef yo'll jest give ol' Jim a show!"

Jim put the banjo down, and swaying back and forth on a ledge of coal, hummed:

"Oh, deah Lohd, Ah'm weary awaitin', awaitin' foh yo' comin'—Ah am."

Jim hummed and Big Tom worked until noontime; then half-a-dozen banjos in as many different pockets, struck as many different tunes. Jim, no longer able to sit on the ledge, reclined against it, and picking up his banjo, began feebly to thrum an accompaniment to his melody—his valedictory. When the half-hour respite was up, he made an effort to get to work. He arose and stood beside Big Tom's full car of coal. He seized it with both hands, but his old head dropped between them, and when he slid to the pit floor, he was humming—"Oh, d-e-a-h L-o-h-d—Ah'm aweary—" Then he rolled over and was still. When Tom returned with the empty car, he found him there with his banjo under his arm. The "slope boss" came along at the same time and poked the muzzle of his gun against the old man's ribs, but there was no response. Tom wept.

"Boss," he said, "Ah reckon yo'll hev ter excuse Jim dis time—he's dead."

"Put his carcass on top of yer car, Tom, and take it away."

When the coal was ready, they put Whitecotton on

top; then Tom took the old man's banjo and with his mighty sinewy hand, tore its strings from the wood. Then, between his hands, he crushed it as if it had been a matchbox, and put it beside his friend.

"Bof on 'em hev played der last chune," he said, as the convict catafalque moved toward the light.

CHAPTER XIII

A DYNAMITE EXPLOSION AND A DASH FOR LIBERTY

THE first man to meet Ruden as he entered "one" that night after his flogging, was Brewster, the "double-lifer." Twenty lashes had considerably weakened Ruden's strong frame. It had made more of an impression on his nervous system than on his body. He tottered to his bed and threw himself across it.

"Perhaps you prefer to be alone," Brewster said, as he lay down beside him.

"Go ahead," Ruden said, "I don't want to talk—but I can listen."

"You are an odd type," Brewster began, "and if you will pardon what seems brutal, I'll be frank enough to tell you that I'm glad you got that flogging."

Ruden turned around on his side and looked at him.

"Why are you glad?"

"You are one of us now!"

"Did it take that to make me one of you?"

"Yes; you were a little high toned—making a sociological study of us, as it were. You were a criminal by an unfortuitous circumstance. Now you smart and suffer, and your heart is a melting-pot of red rebellion."

"Well, now that I am initiated, what's the next thing?"

"I can let you into my secret."

"I confess to you, Brewster, that the murder of old Whitecotton and my own flogging have modified my worship of the State as such."

“What have you been thinking of since you came in off the block?”

“Well—I have thought of many things in a moment of time; but John Brown came to me on that floor—I understood him for the first time.”

“Ah, that’s interesting! Well, you’ve had a chance to see how free the niggers are, anyway!”

“I see that in the South you have ‘niggers’, as you call them, of all races—a laborer here is a ‘nigger’ whether white or black!”

“Well, we white people down here have nigger on the brain, I confess,—and I hate them like hell and as naturally as I breathe; so don’t drag me into a discussion on that, for we could never agree. I want to tell you my plan.”

“Your plan to escape?”

“Exactly.”

“I don’t want to escape—I want to suffer a year’s agony here with these men, and then go out and tell the world.”

“Don’t be an ass, whatever you are! The world, as you call it, wouldn’t believe you; and if a moiety of it did, the majority would crucify you in some way or other. Have a little regard for your own skin; it doesn’t last long down here!”

“Well, tell me your plan!”

“I am in charge of the dynamite of the mine.”

“Oh!”

“Yes, they always give that job to the man who cares little for life. Now, my plan is to get enough men of “one” to carry up enough in one night to blow out the side of the entire stockade!”

“Heavens! what then?”

“Then a dash for liberty and trust for success!”

"Don't count me in until I think it over," Ruden said.

"Stranger," said "Lone Star," who had heard the conversation, "another dose o' leather will clear up th' fog o' yer thought, Ah reckon, so we'll hang on fer ye!"

"'Lone Star,'" said Ruden, "this isn't a personal problem with me; I could get revenge—personal revenge; but I want to act in such a way that the tens of thousands of slaves at the wheel of labor will be helped and not hurt by my action—my conduct!"

"Ye're a little beyant mi depth, stranger," "Lone Star" said, "but ye're on th' level. We feel that, an' what ye say—goes!"

Before the light went out, every man in "one" had looked Ruden over. There were at least half-a-dozen schemes at work among the men of "one," and the promoters of each were quick to take advantage of such mental condition as usually accompanied a whipping. The men hung around for Ruden's benefit until the deputy came along to put the chains on his ankles. Five minutes later the light went out, and he was left alone with his thoughts—and the murderer by his side.

"I've been sizing you up since we arrived here," the murderer said, "and I want to break my silence to give you a word of advice." The voice seemed almost sepulchral in its undertone.

"Well," Ruden whispered, "I'm glad to hear your voice anyway; and as we are chained here for a year, we might as well make ourselves agreeable."

They spoke into each other's ears in whispers—so low that they could not be heard in the next bed.

"Only God knows how long we are chained together; for, presumably, I am here for twenty years, and you are here for one. That's what the judge and the cal-

endar say; but the cankerworm of conditions laughs at them! You are a prisoner of hope. My condition is different—I am the slave of an implacable hatred!”

“I don’t understand you,” Ruden whispered.

“Then listen. Are you willing to exchange confidences with me?”

“Certainly—if my case is of interest to you, I will give it to you in detail.”

“No, your case is of no interest to me; but you are—there is a destiny written on your face that this hell cannot control!”

“Listen! I hear footfalls—” Ruden said.

“It’s that dynamite bunch,” he answered. “They get together at the far corner of the cell in the dark and discuss plans, every night.”

“Look here,” Ruden said, “time is precious; let us get to the heart of what you want to say.”

“The lacerations make you impatient; perhaps we had better postpone it?”

“No—not that; I shall not be able to sleep anyway, but every word counts in these circumstances.”

“Then listen! I am a man whom people have always shunned—with good reason. A Nemesis hangs over me—I was told by a clairvoyant once that an opportunity for a great sacrifice would come to me some day, and if I was equal to it, the spell would be broken. Well, it came—at least, I thought it came, and I met it; but the spell was not broken. I live in an atmosphere of hate—”

“Stop,” Ruden whispered, “tell me of the sacrifice.”

“No—I can’t do that—don’t disturb me till you know all. I have a sister—she urged me to the sacrifice, and it was in the hope that she saw something good in me that I put my neck in the yoke. But she dis-

owned me; and the object of the sacrifice spit upon me. That filled me full of unutterable hatred, and I plotted revenge. Then I saw some light, and I gave up my plans of revenge. Now here is the point—are you listening?”

“Yes.”

“If at any time you don’t hear distinctly, cough gently, and I’ll repeat.”

“Wait a moment!” Ruden tried to lie on his back, but the pain was too great. He turned over again on his stomach, and they resumed their previous mouth to ear position.

“What is your name?” asked the murderer.

“I am registered as ‘Stephen Dasza’;” call me ‘Steve.’ And yours?”

“I was convicted under the name of ‘Jonathan Sparks’—call me ‘Jean.’ ”

“Then to the point, Jean.”

“Steve, you are on the wrong trail. Your attempt to help old Whitecotton is an example,—you increased his pain, hurried his death and got flogged for your impulse!”

“It was a good impulse.”

“No doubt—but the world at present is cursed with an overplus of inefficient goodness—your impulse must have sense as well as intuition—that’s trite, pardon me—I must to the point or you will be too impatient to hear me out.”

“What about your sleep?”

“That’s unimportant—sound sleep will follow an understanding.”

“I was concerned only about you,” Ruden said.

“And I,” said Jean, “am taking advantage of your inability to sleep.”

"Go on, please!"

"Well, in a nutshell, this is what I want to say—physical force is only a factor when collectively applied—for an individual or a group to use it as a weapon for reform or revenge means failure and retrogression—the new force—the force of the future is mental.

"Are you listening?"

"Yes, I agree with you."

"You agree with me—but will you act with me?"

"How?"

"You have the creative mind—I have the material—let us draw up an indictment."

"Indict a race?"

"Not a race merely but a whole civilization!"

"In a document?"

"Yes,—John Howard and Elizabeth Fry did it.—Why not two convicts who are victims of a system?"

"But—"

"Yes—I know." Jean said as he groped for Ruden's arm and pressed his lips to his ear—"I know what's in your mind—I am a murderer—but what is murder? Illegal killing—but to every illegal killing there are ten thousand cold-blooded murders within the law! The world is ignorant—stupid—only mental dynamite will break up the callousness of the human heart, but it can be broken—it shall be broken—we—you and I—convicts—can do it—if we will!"

Ruden groped for his hand—the hands met and gripped each other tightly.

"We'll try—by God's grace," said Ruden.

"I know nothing of God's grace," said Jean, "but if that's essential, you furnish it.—I'll furnish the mental dynamite!"

"Good night, Jean."

“Good night, Steve.”

These whispering conferences went on night after night for weeks—so did the dynamite round table in the far end of the cell.

The *coup de stockade* was to be the first order of business after Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving day was usually a day of feasting. The State demands of stockade wardens that meat and white bread be served once a week—pork was not considered meat. These extra delicacies were usually served on Sunday when the men had time to appreciate them. On Thanksgiving, 1906, the meat and bread of the previous Sunday were held over and served on Thanksgiving Day as a token of the consideration and appreciation of the Genessee Coal and Iron Company. In addition to these extras a Sunday School in the ‘Pittsburg of the South’ had donated an orange and a small stick of candy for each convict and each man was asked to write a note of appreciation—“if only a few words” to stimulate the good work on future Thanksgivings. The “blow out” of the day, as the men called it, was a roast turkey and apple pie dinner, given to a limited gilt-edged list of guests in “one.”

There was a system in vogue by which for every ton of coal mined above the regulation requirement a ticket exchangeable at the stockade store for thirty cents’ worth of groceries was given. This, of course, was for “first class” men. If a second class man aimed at this incentive he was immediately put into the first class. The deputies traded considerably in these tickets and were able to cash them at face value, whereas the convicts had to take whatever the store provided and prices there ranged from two to three hundred per cent. higher than elsewhere.

It was one of these tickets that "Lone Star" bet on the movements of the fly.

The turkey dinner therefore was the result of long months of toil in the coal pit of the Genessee Coal and Iron Company. Labor there wasn't a matter of crime—all crimes were alike—it was a matter of physical condition—of 'class,' not in morals, but in mining. The Coal Company hired these men from the State at a dollar a day per head and proceeded to work them to the limit of their physical ability. Ruden and Jean were invited to turkey dinner.

"Gents," said "Kentuck," "Ah've sorter capped th' climax in the banquet business in these parts b' havin' a real live sky pilot t' ax a blessin'."

All hands looked at Ruden—he was embarrassed.

"Go on parson!" said "Lone Star," "we're all onto ye—so ye're in for it."

It was an act of modesty that made Ruden bow his head—he had no intention of prayer or grace, but every man stood there with bowed head also.

After a painful suspense, in a trembling voice, he said: "God, here in this place where there is neither Spring, Summer, Autumn nor Winter, where the blue dome of heaven is shut out from us by a layer of coal by day and a rotted roof by night, where Sun and Moon and Stars are strangers and friends are memories of a buried past; where the birds sing not nor flowers bloom; where there is neither joy in labor nor balm in sleep—clad in the uniform of shame, deserted by the State, insulted by the Church, in an atmosphere of hate where time is counted by cars of coal and the re-percussions of pain—here God, in hell, we lift up our voices and for the human touch and comradeship around this accursed board we thank thee!"

The men looked at each other for a moment, and then altogether at Ruden.

"Lone Star" being asked to "carve,"—knives and forks were forbidden—pulled the turkey apart and divided it.

After dinner, they smoked, told stories and watched the guards in the watch boxes on the fence—a favorite Sunday diversion in "one." The dynamiters met for a last conference. The difficulties were gone over one by one and an hour set.

The third night after Thanksgiving, about five minutes after the return from supper, an explosion that blew a section of the stockade into the air was heard and shook the earth for miles around. The south end of "one" disappeared and from what was left, men rushed like rats out of a hole and sprang at the high fence. Every man who ventured the leap took his life in his hands. As the men struck the fence there was a volley from the shotguns in the sentry boxes that brought a score of men to the ground. Only four of them topped the fence, two of them dropped back into the yard, shot through the body—one of them, "Kentuck," fatally. Brewster received three bullets but the doctors said he would do a few more of his 140 years.

"Lone Star"—considered the most desperate man in the stockade—was found standing at the edge of the ruins motionless and apparently unconcerned—this puzzled the officers more than anything else connected with the affair. Ruden and his partner took no part in it and were not even questioned by the Warden. Eleven negroes and three white men were blown to death and a thousand dollars' worth of the Genessee Coal and Iron Company's property was destroyed.

CHAPTER XIV

VOICES FROM THE ABYSS

A SPACE writer on a daily paper wrote a sensational story of the affair and so stirred the vicinity that the Governor appointed a commission to inquire into the explosion and the events leading up to it.

Three of the largest employers of labor in the State were appointed members of it.

"Congressman Oglesby," said the *Birmingham Argus*, editorially, "is the wisest selection the Governor could have made, and because of his wide experience and well known interest in all matters pertaining to labor will make a most excellent Chairman."

At the first day's session the Commission called the Warden, half-a-dozen deputies and the prison physician, who testified as to their knowledge of the explosion. The bulk of the testimony related to the difficulties of handling convict labor, some of it related to the results of the explosion. The second day "Lone Star" was a picturesque feature of the proceedings. His record was before the Commissioners—they knew the man.

"A deputy testified yesterday," said the Chairman of the Commission, "that you stood calmly within a few feet of the explosion when it occurred. Tell us what you were doing at the time?"

"Jedge," said "Lone Star," "Ah, 'spects ye want t' hear why Ah didn't make no move in th' direction o' ma reputation—ain't that th' kernel o' yer nut?"

“Well, yes,” said Colonel Oglethorpe, “that’s about it.”

“Well, that’s a dead cinch, Jedge—Ah seen th’ ranch go up an’ th’ coons mixin’ wi’ th’ wreckage—Ah seen the boys make their break for th’ fence. Somethin’ said to me—‘Lone Star,’ it says, ‘shuffle the cards again an’ take a new hand, yer luck may hit a new trail.’ So Ah folded m’ arms an’ stud thar like Ah was President o’ th’ Genessee Company—that’s the tale, Jedge—it ain’t got no moral as Ah know of.”

The Commissioners smiled—the Warden and deputies were amused and nodded to each other—“Lone Star” was excused and sent back.

“Why did you stand still?” Ruden asked “Lone Star” when they got back to the big cell.

“Ah was paralyzed, boss—jest paralyzed!”

Jonathan Sparks refused to appear.

“Dosza” was called. He took a handful of notes from his pocket. They were pencilled on scraps of paper of various colors and qualities—they were numbered and in order—he set them on the table before him for reference.

“Gentlemen of the Commission,” Ruden began, “before I testify as to what I know of the events leading up to the explosion, I desire to make a request.” The voice startled the Commissioners—the Chairman beckoned for the Warden, probably for the record of this unusual convict.

“Proceed,” he said.

“I will tell the truth as I know it on condition that you give immediate orders that I be transferred to another jail.”

“We have no such power,” the Commission said.

“Then I refuse to testify.”

There was a private conference and later a telephone communication with the Governor.

"The Governor," said Colonel Oglethorpe, "will communicate with the proper authorities and have you transferred, probably—to-morrow."

"Thank you," Ruden said, and proceeded.

"There is a sentiment in the South that the Anglo-Saxon is a little different—a little superior to the African race. White men as babes suck that sentiment at their mother's breasts. It is woven into the texture of the child's speech and the thinking of the youth, and at maturity it has a large place in the life of the dominant white people. The sentiment does not die when clothed in convict stripes. In the old slavery the lash was applied to the backs of the black men only. In the industrial slavery of to-day it is applied with equal brutality to both black and white. The Anglo-Saxon does not easily accustom himself to the life of a slave.

"When the Southern white man is stretched on the floor of a convict cell—a negro on his shoulders and one on his legs to keep him down while he is flogged into insensibility, he is very likely on recovery to fight back with a stronger weapon.

"The explosion at Bratt City was the result—partly of the lash on the back of the white man. I consider that the chief in a series of causes.

"Another of the causes is murder. I do not expect much sympathy when I speak of the black man, but I will say nevertheless that the life of the average negro is of less consequence than the life of the average mule in the mines. Negroes have been murdered by the lash, by the shotgun, by exposure, by disease and by filth."

"You mean murder as the result of neglect, I presume," the Chairman interrupted.

"No, not that exactly—the Warden and the doctor kicked a man to death recently and they have done it before. I saw them do it, and got flogged for asking for mercy for the convict. I saw the Warden cut deep tracks in the man's back and next morning the doctor stuffed the bloody gutter-ways full of cotton—the man, of course, died in the mine at his work.

"Thirty cents a day is allowed for each man's food, and it costs the caterer just five cents per capita.

"The place is infested with rats, mice and vermin.

"Look at the doctor's report for last year and see the number of deaths by tuberculosis. Instead of tackling the white plague as a man of science would, the prison physician sells his services to the highest bidder. Any man who has the price can be put in a hospital and when the Governor comes to inspect the sick he finds none, not one. Even the dying are stowed away until the Governor's party departs in its special car.

"Every girl and every woman in the female department is used for immoral purposes, the Warden has first pick, the physician second, and what's left the deputies use.

"The most comely young woman that ever entered that nursery of death was serving a sentence of two years. She bore a child each year and took them with her. In two weeks she was convicted of a crime that the father of her second child arranged for her. She was falsely convicted and is again the mistress of the same brute."

"Is she a nigger?" asked the Chairman.

"Does the gentleman mean a negress?"

"Yes."

"My reply is: She is a woman.

"The flogging of men—white men—takes one back

a few hundred years, but what shall we say of the flogging of women in the State of Alabama?

"We have heard the wild screams of women over in our cells when the lash like a snake has coiled itself around the back and bitten with its stinging point the bare bosom of a woman!"

"Negresses—you mean!"

"I mean women.

"There are only a few white men strong enough to mine more than the five tons required each day but there are many negroes who can. For each ton a thirty cent ticket is given. The deputies have been systematically exploiting and robbing these men of their hard earned extras—that might be expected, but the most aggravated case that came to my notice was the case of big Frank Smythe, a Canadian. Frank is serving a ten-year sentence—he says he is innocent and in order to attempt to get a new trial he worked for nearly three years to get one hundred dollars by mining extra coal. He got his money—at least he got a hundred dollars out of several hundred dollars' worth of extra labor and he went into the Warden's office, gave the hundred dollars to the President of the prison-board to get a new hearing."

"Who was that?"

"The name of the President at that time was Llwelllyn Oglethorpe!"

"You are a liar," said the Chairman.

"The proofs are all at hand!" Ruden retorted.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Oglethorpe, "I am but one of the Commission, but I object to the further hearing of the irresponsible liar."

"Let him finish," the others suggested mildly.

"I have almost finished, gentlemen. Frank Smythe

never got his hearing and he has given up all hope of ever seeing his money.

“When a prophet of the New South says in his book, ‘Problems of the Present South,’ that the chief cause of the marvellous industrial development of the South is ‘its cheap and *tractable* labor,’ the outside world is ignorant of just how cheap and just how tractable it is. I have shown you how it is made tractable—how the fortunes of the Southern aristocracy are replenished. Let me close by saying that despicable as is the petty grafting on the lives of the helpless prisoners, more despicable still is the chief grafter of all—the State of Alabama, the machinery of whose government is kept running by the blood of her most helpless citizens.”

The inquiry dragged on for ten days, but Ruden had put into the compass of a few minutes the gist of the testimony. To the surprise of everybody in “one,” the Board of Pardons paroled “Lone Star” for his exemplary conduct the night of the explosion.

The institution was too much in the lime light to harm Ruden for his revelation. He was taken the following day to a private stockade in Montgomery County.

The nerve of “Kentuck” excited the admiration of everybody in the hospital. They knew he was dying and in the last hours no slightest wish was left ungratified. Indeed, he had but one wish. It was to see the ex-parson of “one.” As soon as Ruden returned to his cell from the investigation, he was escorted by a deputy to the cot side of “Kentuck.”

“Parson,” he said, “Ah’ve staked a new claim an’ Ah’ve bin a hankerin’ t’ see ye fur a brief spell before Ah begin t’ prove up on it.”

“Perhaps there’s something I can do, ‘Kentuck’?”

“Ah’ve thought o’ that—Ah can’t write no letters an’ there’s but one to write ef Ah could.”

“I get out in a year and would gladly convey a personal message to anyone—anywhere.”

“Ah, ye’ve got a line on m’ thinking.” “Kentuck” was weakening and his voice was feeble. Ruden sat beside him on the edge of the cot. The physician came along and seeing “Kentuck’s” visitor, said: “So you are the guy ‘Kentuck’ wanted to see, hey?”

There was no reply.

“Cut it short, ‘Kentuck.’ I don’t want this Dago around no more’n I can help, see?”

“Taint th’ Dago, Doe; its th’ last words of a dying man to his pal.”

“Well, cut them short, that’s all.”

“Deputy,” said “Kentuck,” “did th’ Warden say Ah eud hev my wish?”

“Sure thing, go on.”

“Parson, Ah would do th’ same thing for a pal as Ah thought anythin’ on—Ah sho would.”

“Have no fear, ‘Kentuck.’ ”

“There’s a mill village by the name of Arden a few miles out o’ Anniston—it’s a small place—a grocery, a church and the big mill. On the north edge, at the cross roads, there’s a cottage—white, wi’ a magnoly tree in th’ yard: Ax fur Nell.

“Tell ’er th’ night we slid apart somethin’ told me we should never meet again—it wuz a feelin’ like death. Ah took th’ ol’ violin over th’ hill t’ th’ grave-yard. It wuz moonlight—Ah played on th’ lone fence some o’ th’ ol’ tunes that uster bring the tears to ’er eyes. Ah God, them eyes o’ hern! ‘Sweet an’ low,’ was the last one an’ th’ best—then Ah crushed th’ fiddle like a match-box—dug a hole be the big pine in th’ corner an’

laid it there,—laid it like a dead baby—then I done all them desperate things that put me in stripes an' irons. Ax her to say a prayer fur Jim—m' name's Jim Peters." He was exhausted, closed his eyes and for a moment was silent.

"Tell 'er, Parson," he said, when he began again, "it wuz all a mistake them notions o' hern about th' eolor o' a man's skin—it's th' heart that counts."

"Come on," the deputy said impatiently, "Ye've chewed long enough."

"Kentuck's" hand was already relaxing its hold. Ruden appealed to the deputy for another minute, but was hustled away.

"Good-bye, 'Kentuck,' good-bye," he said, as he pressed the hand of the desperado, but there was no response. Next day, Ruden, chained to a deputy, was led away from the stockade. As he passed out of one gate four striped pall-bearers carried the remains of "Kentuck" out of another to the woods for burial.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH MRS. RUDEN GETS A FULL DRAUGHT AT THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

CHRISTMAS Eve, 1906, Wetumpka Mansion, the home of the Oglethorpes, was the scene of a brilliant ball. It eclipsed everything of the kind ever held in the State of Alabama. The Governor, Senators, Congressmen and Mayors of the larger cities were there, so were the debutantes of the season and women known far and wide for beauty and accomplishment. Workmen had spent a month preparing the new ball-room and many of the wealthy women had been much longer in the preparation of the expensive and elaborate gowns, detailed descriptions of which were in the newspaper offices a week before the event took place. A French hair-dresser and a manicurist had been on the estate for a week getting Mrs. Ruden in shape. A peep into Mrs. Ruden's room at Wetumpka would have astounded her acquaintances in New Oxford. A black maid had been employed to attend exclusively to the care of her skin. She was bathed in preparations, pomaded, cold-creamed, massaged and polished with the care given the mistress of a Medieval King.

"Dearie," said Mrs. Oglethorpe, as they met in the hall after the last touch to her toilet, "You look like a queen!"

"You darling," said Mrs. Ruden, kissing her gently and with due deference to that last touch, "I feel like the friend of one."

Mrs. Oglethorpe on the arm of the Governor led the grand march. Mrs. Ruden and the host came next. It was the first time in fifteen years she had been able to show her lily white throat and the light pink color of her finely shaped bosom. A New York dressmaker had made a special trip to prepare the gown. The Colonel looked ten years less than his age. He too was radiant. They danced the first dance together and they planned to meet again at the third. The second he danced with his wife and Mrs. Ruden danced with the Governor.

At the close of the third dance the host and his guest wandered away off to a rustie seat, beneath a magnolia tree, a place where, the Colonel said, "There was always a breeze that swept in out of the valley."

"I saw a cloud on your brow, Madeline, as the Governor seated you under the palm; what was it?"

"Nothing much."

"A regret?"

"No, not that exactly."

"What then?"

"Lew," she said, "I enjoy this to the full—almost."

"Why 'almost'?"

"This finery, this dress, these jewels, I would give the world if I did not have to hide in my own soul their origin!"

"Oh rot," he said, "can't you have a little present from a friend without publishing it?"

"I could if Mabel had given it—or if she knew about it!"

"Well, for heaven's sake, dear, don't spoil this thing that I spent two months planning for you. This entire thing is for you,—you only. You love life, full, free, radiant, joyful life, here it is! drink it in for a night. Let it be the nectar of the gods to your soul, and when

the music dies down and the lights are out, let us look at the soberer side of things." He put his hand caressingly on her bare white shoulder. As he did so, two young people tip-toed under the tree and made for the rustic bench. It was young Oglethorpe and the Governor's daughter. The Colonel turned his back to the newcomers and almost pushed his companion out of the shade in front of him.

"I'm not the only one here who knows the obscure corners," he said as he led her back into the ball-room.

They were joined at once by Mrs. Oglethorpe—"My dear girlie," she said, "you've made a tremendous hit with the Governor—he blushed like a girl when he asked me about you—he wants another dance—don't refuse—cut somebody else out and I'll soothe down the disappointed one!"

The three of them consulted Mrs. Ruden's card—"Well," she said, "the only one that can be smoothed over is Mr. Atkins."

"I'll see him right off, dearie, and when the Governor comes show him the change on your card."

"Mrs. Ruden," the Governor said as he passed, but he got no further. "Mrs. Oglethorpe has been giving you away," Mrs. Ruden said smiling.

"Murder will out" he said,—“but really, now, how is your card, Mrs. Ruden?"

"Well, I have just wiped out the name of an ardent young scion of a Southern family and substituted for it the sire of another." He looked over her shoulder and smiled as he saw his name.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "you are as kind as you are beautiful, and I am encouraged to hope that your stay in the South is an indefinite one—is it?"

"Well, I am to be here the rest of the winter, anyway."

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "Now we've been talking of an affair such as this—not an inaugural sort of thing, for there one has to invite everybody—but a ball where we can invite the folks we know—really know and love—don't you know?"

"I understand," she said.

"I want you to know my family—they too will be as glad as I to have you grace our ball, and if the Oglethorpes can spare you to come and stay awhile—"

"You are very kind, Governor,—I am sure the pleasure will be mutual."

"You art melting here," he said as he took her arm and led her into the garden. They passed Mrs. Oglethorpe and the women exchanged glances as intelligent as speech.

"If I knew this garden as well as you do," he said, "I would take you to a quiet, cosey corner where you might really rest and be undisturbed for the interval."

"And what would you do with the interval?"

"I would double, treble, quadruple it—I would make the interval all—the whole thing!"

"Oh, you men!"

"And you women!"

"Are you well acquainted with French history, Governor?"

"Not very."

"I wanted to ask a question that has been in my mind for years."

"Ask it anyway."

"The reformers have splashed history red with blood—they have made life a vale of tears and I have always imagined that the mistress of an autocrat or a demagogue could accomplish more reforms than Jeanne d' Arc or the reformers! What do you think?"

"You will pardon me if I appear to be a pagan in my answer, but I think a man who has a beautiful wife is a fool to be a reformer!"

They were walking slowly along, arm in arm, in the darkness.

"Why?" she asked.

"Take me to a cosy seat and I'll tell you!" he answered.

They reached the seat where the Colonel and she had ensconced themselves earlier in the evening.

"Here," she said, "is the quietest place in the garden, but we must not stay more than a minute."

"I did not mean to be personal in that partial answer to your question—but the Colonel hinted that your husband was a reformer, and instantly there came up before me half-a-dozen poverty-stricken growlers who try to make life miserable for such men as Oglethorpe and myself."

"Enlarge on your partial answer to my question."

"Well, when a man whose wealth consists of a chicken coop starts out to reform my business I fight him, and just because I have been successful I can beat him, but what is business to a man when he meets a woman of such charms as you possess?"

Mrs. Ruden laughed. It was hearty and forced her companion to probe after its origin.

"Oh," she said languidly in answer to his question, "I was thinking of the original Salome dance."

"Well, as I am not acquainted with the copies even, I am still at a loss to know."

The Governor was interrupted by the sudden entrance into the bower of a couple who seemed familiar with the place. They arose to go, but the newcomers wheeled around and retraced their steps.

"The next number is called," Mrs. Ruden said, "and I am in disgrace—my partner will be waiting."

"Then we will talk the matter out later—I will count the seconds till I feel the touch of your arm again."

He caressed the arm gently. His speech had the flavor and passion of youth, and as he left her at the ball-room door he kissed her hand, with the grace of a knight, and was gone.

"You look radiant, Madeline," were the first words of her hostess, who had been watching her.

"I am, dearie."

"Isn't the Governor charming?"

"He's a man, Mabel."

"You didn't tell him that, I hope!"

"Oh, no—I just rambled along with him."

"Where?"

"I mean mentally, dear."

"He's perfectly silly over you!"

The dance was in progress. She had arrived late for it, but was not kept waiting long.

To a person who had been pent up with children and problems of all kinds this freedom was an intoxication—the music—the well dressed men and women—the color schemes—the abnormal mental atmosphere. Every new partner was a hidden fire with which she liked to play. It was so exciting to get near the edge—to fence with mental foils—to talk in veiled speech—to rush in where angels fear to tread and enjoy the excitement.

Mrs. Ruden's partner in the third dance was Colonel Oglethorpe—they whirled around for a few minutes and then disappeared. Only one person watched their movements.

"This is insanity, Lew," she said, as they seated

themselves on the bench in the obscure corner. "Scores of people are around—we have all the time there is, but this is your guests' time."

"True," he said, "very true, but I don't see you every day in that dress, and I want to feast my eyes on what it doesn't cover."

"Then the light ought to suit you better."

"Well, it does and it doesn't. I have not taken my eyes off you since the ball began. I have compared you with the loveliest of the debutantes—they are not in it with you."

Madeline lay back and spread her white arms along the back of the seat. He turned partly around toward her and ran his hand softly along her arm. "There is a subtlety in your charm," he said, "that thrills me with the ecstasy of a god." Then the hand expressed a little more of the state of his mind. When it did so she arose hastily—she thought she heard footsteps approaching, but before she could speak he had caught her full in his arms, and holding her as if she were a child of ten he kissed her passionately until a faint cry escaped her lips—the cry of a soul in pain. Her body began to relax and he laid her gently on the seat again. As he did so a woman emerged from behind the big magnolia and stood for an instant in the shadow. Madeline saw her and clutched her companion tightly by the arm. The figure stood but an instant and then vanished.

"My God!" she exclaimed, "how can I go back into the light? My face burns—I am so faint! Oh!"

He stood in front of her vigorously plying a fan. "Go!" she said—"go back to your guests and leave me."

"I can't leave you, Madeline!"

"Go! I tell you!"

He laid the fan in her lap and went back into the crowd.

"Hello, Dad!" said the Colonel's second son as he met his father. "Mam's sick as a horse and gone to lie down—headache or something. You'd better go and see her!" and he passed out into the garden.

A few minutes later Mrs. Ruden entered the ball-room and found the Governor waiting his number on her card.

As she fell easily into the rhythmic swing of the music in the arms of her partner, she was radiant with the joy of living. If there was any regret in her soul her face did not show it. Around the spacious ball-room they danced with liteness, dignity and hauteur. Their every movement was watched, and when they left the warm glow of the room for the cool shade in the garden they were followed by the eyes of at least half-a-dozen curious women.

"Let us see," said the Governor as soon as they were seated, "we were talking of reform and reformers, weren't we?"

"No, it was a question of methods we were discussing."

"Fair lady," said the Governor, "let us not waste golden moments with leaden subjects. To-night we drink the old wine—the wine of the gods, and to-morrow wear off the intoxication on work—sordid work."

"That applies only to workers—what will the drones do?"

"Wear theirs off on the workers, I reckon."

"In ethies, Governor," Mrs. Ruden said, "what is golden to one person may be leaden to another. Isn't that so?"

"But, my dear, pardon me, it's peculiarly a New

England trait to discuss ethics at a ball—in the South—”

“In the South,” she interrupted, “on such occasions you are more French than the Parisians.”

“If by ‘French’ you mean a survival of chivalry, I plead guilty.”

“Do you know Don Quixote?” she asked.

“No, he’s a new one on me,” he said laughing, “but I know something of Don Juan.”

They were interrupted, but neither of them desired to take advantage of the intrusion.

“I have something to suggest,” he said, as they regained their composure, “and if I don’t say it now my chance will be lost.”

“Perhaps it would be better lost.”

“I don’t think so—anyway I will venture it. Now look here, Mrs. Ruden: My wife and daughter want you to make us a visit before you go North again, and if you are interested in any reforms just let me know and see how quickly they can be put into effect. Will you come?”

“You offer tremendous inducements.”

“Will you come?”

“I’ll think it over.”

“You’ll let me know?”

“Certainly.”

He took her hand tenderly in both of his and raised them to his lips, then led her back slowly into the light.

“Run upstairs and see Mabel,” Colonel Ogleshorpe whispered as he passed her in the hall.

The bed-room door was locked and the colored servant said that her mistress was asleep.

When she returned to the hall some of the bloom of youth had gone from her face. It wasn’t merely a shut

door that kept her from her friend but a high stone wall—a wall she had built with her own hands. She searched the crowd for her host and when she found him she poured into his ear her forebodings.

“Lew,” she said, “my heart feels like stone—cold and hard. I believe Mabel saw us in the arbor.”

“Humbug! dear,” he said, “dismiss it from your mind, and for heaven’s sake, let love dominate you as it did an hour ago.”

“I am not blaming anyone—I’m looking for sympathy, Lew.”

“Sympathy is a weak word in this case; you are—” he lowered his voice and looked into her eyes—“you are looking for love, and there’s an ocean of it around you!”

The Governor and his family were saying good-bye to all around; as he approached, Mrs. Ruden said in an undertone, “Here comes old Lochinvar.”

“Ah, Governor,” Colonel Oglethorpe said as he extended his hand, “What a tyrant is time—so you are going?”

“I disagree,” said his excellency—“Time is my friend; he has kept the best of life until this hour for me.”

“We want you to come to us for a few weeks,” the Governor’s wife said in her most charming manner to Mrs. Ruden, and the daughter added her plea to the invitation.

It was like the opening of one door as another closed to the guest of Wetumpka Mansion, for a secret dread was eating at her heart, and quenched the flames in her eyes that had made her the most charming personality of the occasion.

One after another the guests departed—many of

them lingering around for a final word with the Colonel's guest.

Toward the end of the long program only a dozen couples remained. Mrs. Ruden excused herself and went to her room. The Colonel took her arm and led her to the top of the first floor landing. Then like a hunted animal she rushed to her room. Her first impulse was to throw herself on her bed just as she was, but instead she turned all the lights on and viewed herself in the great pier mirror that almost covered one end of the room. "So that is what held men's attention," she muttered as she looked at her bare shoulders and arms. Then she moved closer and looked into her own eyes. She thought she saw deep rings around them, but she knew that they had lost much of their lustre in the last hour. Her mind was a question mark and her heart was full of doubt and foreboding. Mabel was in perfect health—in perfect spirits—a few minutes before it was announced that she was ill. Someone was in the vicinity of the arbor when her host made his passionate outburst of affection. She thought of the Governor and his effusive attentions; she thought of her minor partners in the program—married and unmarried.

On the mantel-piece stood portraits of her husband and children. She went over and looked at them. As she put back her husband's portrait she turned his face to the wall. She saw a sternness that made her uneasy.

CHAPTER XVI

TROUBLE IN BLACK AND WHITE

A COLORED maid came to undress and bathe her. Mrs. Ruden resigned herself to the care of the black woman and lay languid and limp.

"Honey, yo' is sho'ly tired," said the maid.

"Yes, Dinah. I am tired in my body, tired in my mind, tired in my heart."

"Sakes alive, Missus, dat's the wust ease of down-an-outness Ah've heered on fur quite a spell."

"You never get tired in that way, do you Dinah?"

"What's d' use!"

"You have no trouble of any kind?"

"Trouble's different, honey."

"What kind of trouble have you, Dinah?"

"Wus'n you hev, honey."

"Tell me about it?"

"Tain't like white folks' trouble."

"How do you know?"

"Ha, ha," tittered Dinah, "bekase Ah'm black."

Dinah hummed in a low tone, a plantation melody, as she performed the last services of the day. Mrs. Ruden had shut her eyes, and Dinah, thinking she was asleep, began to act on the thought.

"Dinah, I can't go to sleep until I compare your trouble with mine. Tell me some of the things that make you ery."

"Honey," Dinah said, laughing, "Ah erys as Ah blush—in d' inards."

It seemed a hopeless task to probe further, but tired as she was, she was groping after a crumb of comfort and she imagined it could be found in the white heart of her black maid.

Dinah's task was about completed; she had gathered up the paraphernalia and was arranging the pillows, when Mrs. Ruden made a last appeal.

"I'm going to tell you one of my troubles, Dinah, and you will tell me one of yours; then we will go to sleep."

"Don't yo' want me t' put yo' to sleep wif a line of a hymn instead, honey?"

Without answering Mrs. Ruden pointed to the photographs on the mantel-piece—"Bring them over to me, Dinah." The four cards were brought. Mrs. Ruden sat up and made Dinah sit beside her on the bed. "These are my babies, Dinah. I love them with my whole soul—this is my husband—isn't he fine looking?"

"Does yo' lob yo' man, too?" Dinah asked.

"Well, that's my trouble: he was always wanting one thing and I was always wanting another."

"All famblies are tarred with that same stick, honey. Dere nevah wuz since d' world began a white fambly what didn't git mussed up wif dat same trouble."

"What do black families get mussed up with?" was the next question put to Dinah, but she hedged again.

"I don't believe you have a care or a trouble of any kind, Dinah, but if I could be like you I would be willing to be as black as you are!"

Dinah looked sad. She was silent for a moment, then she got down on her knees, put her clasped hands on her Mistress's knees and said, "Ef yo' won't nevah tell nobody Ah'll tell yo' what makes Dinah cry."

"I promise, Dinah."

“Cross yo’ heart an’ say ‘Lordy’ three times runnin’.”

“Honey,” she began when the conditions had been complied with—“Yo’ troubles ain’t ez big ez ’skeeter bites, dey sho ain’t.”

“Ef yo’ had two nice chillun what seen der father ev’ry day an’ eaint nevah know dat he is—nor call ’im ‘daddy’ yo’d be a sight wuss orf—wudn’t you’?”

“Poor Dinah,” Mrs. Ruden said as she stroked the rough black hands, “of course I would.”

“An’ ef yo’ pass’d d’ daddy ob yo’ pickaninnies fo’ty times a day an’ yo’ eaint show dat he is, wudn’t yo’ simper bewiles when yo’ wuz all alonie?”

“You blessed girl, I would die of a broken heart!”

Dinah felt the sympathy intensely—tears came to her eyes but she made her point by saying: “Dat’s black folks’ trouble, honey.”

Long after Dinah had gone the minister’s wife, unable to sleep, kept muttering to herself: “Black folks’ trouble, black folks’ trouble.”

CHAPTER XVII

A RACIAL PARIAH AND A SOCIAL OUTCAST

THREE hundred yards from the Mansion, in a row of straggling shacks lived a hundred men rented from the State. Two-thirds of them were black. At five o'clock on the morning after the ball ten white convicts were detailed to clean up the lawn and rake the walks.

Dinah left her Mistress's room at four and the chain gang arrived a little after five. Mrs. Ruden had heard the chains before, but the morning after the ball the sounds grated on her nerves. Sleep was out of the question. She stuffed her ears with absorbent cotton but the sounds, though somewhat deadened, were still distinct enough to be heard inside the house. She walked up and down her room hoping every minute that the gang would finish its work and go. She opened the door softly and looked outside. All was still.

Colonel Oglethorpe's room was directly opposite: Mabel's was next the guest chamber. She went back into her room—sat down at the desk and scribbled a note:

“For God's sake send those convicts away—the rattling of their chains will drive me mad!”

She stopped—looked around, chewed the tip of the pen holder for a few minutes in deep meditation. He had spent two months getting up the ball. He had spent thousands of dollars in jewelry, dress and personal service—it was all so brilliant and so successful. He would expect congratulation, thanks and gratitude.

No, that note was out of the question. She tore it up and threw it in the waste paper basket and began again.

“*My dear—*

“Last night I put the goblet to my lips and took a full draught of life. How can I ever thank you enough?”

The chains had ceased clanking. She opened the window and looked out. Only two convicts remained, and they were washing glass.

There was no need now of any note—still he would be glad of even this and so early—if it could only be conveyed safely to him. It was vague and indefinite enough and yet just what a man, under the circumstances, would conjure to his soul.

The note was folded—enclosed in an envelope without a name.

Again the door was softly opened. This time a black boy was coming downstairs. Before he had reached the second floor she had gotten into a kimona and was at the door.

Rather by motions than by words she directed the boy to put the note under the Colonel's door and knock.

“Come in!” she said, five minutes later in answer to what she thought was the knock of Dinah, and in came her hostess.

“You dear girl!” said Mrs. Oglethorpe. “I just got your note and read it to Lew. We are of course delighted that you had a good time. I am going to see that you have another ‘draught’ before you leave us!” Mrs. Oglethorpe laughed, but to her friend there was a sepulchral tone that could not be mistaken. Was this a master play?—she wondered, or was it some deep hidden sorrow? They lay beside each other on the

bed and talked for an hour—talked of the ball and the guests, but the note was referred to but once again.

“Just before I got your note,” Mrs. Oglethorpe said, “I was reading the diary I kept when you and I were in school together dreaming our dreams and building our air castles—do you remember, Madeline, what our ideas were then?”

“Yes, I kept a diary, too, as you must remember, and hundreds of times during the past ten years I have perused it with interest and wonder.”

“Let me bring mine in,” Mabel said as she put her slippers on. In a few minutes she returned with the faded book.

“January first, 1880,” she read smilingly. “Madeline and I cannot agree. She wants an idealist for a husband, I want a society man—accomplished, well-dressed, well bred and with a fortune! Both are rare, but I shall die an old maid if I don’t get my ideal—That’s what Madeline says about her ideal also!” The women laughed and looked at each other. “Well,” Madeline said, “we both got what we set our hearts on—didn’t we?”

“I wonder why it is,” Mabel said, as if she hadn’t heard her friend’s question, “that maturity always brings such a cloak of reserve—we call it reserve—it’s more like hypocrisy?”

“Does it always?”

“Well, here we are—you and I, friends—intimate friends all our lives, and when we talk we fence and cover in the most subtle manner our real lives. You got sick of your idealist because you nearly starved and I am sick of society because I am surfeited! Isn’t that so?”

“It isn’t really because you are surfeited, dear!”

"Yes, Madeline, it is. I am surfeited of sham—of social veneer—of make-believe life—of oppression of the poor—of the clothes wrung out of the blood of the workers!"

"Dearie, that sounds like what I have listened to for a dozen years. It's easy for you to say it, but when it costs comfort to say, it's not so easy."

"Madeline, dear, let us just for once in our maturity be as we were when we were girls together—let us speak the truth. Now, what does life mean to you? I mean what is the purpose of it. What are you driving at?"

"Well, first of all its physical—when the physical needs are supplied, its mental and after that its spiritual. I loathe poverty and it makes me loathsome to others!"

"Life to you, then, is first a thing of the senses, then a thing of the soul—is that it?"

"That is one way of putting it."

The friends looked at each other and each knew that there was a point beyond which they could not go. There was a life behind life, that was walled in. They were like fencers, playing for an opening, or generals making flank movements. Both were playing a big game and neither of them showed their trump cards.

Dinah knocked and was admitted. Mrs. Oglethorpe ordered coffee and toast for two. When the door closed she took Madeline's hand in hers and said: "You know, dear, that both here and in Washington we mingle with what is called 'Society'—I mention this to remind you that we know what you call 'the higher life.' I know hundreds of men—good men, too, but of all I know only two excite my admiration and command my respect.

"One of them is our landscape gardener, a negro,

and the other is a gentleman of the type of Christ—he is a convict!”

“A negro and a convict!”

“Yes, one a racial pariah and the other a social out-cast!”

“I am astonished—” Madeline said. “I would like to know more about them—why are they where they are?”

“A more important question is—‘being where they are, why are they *what* they are?’ ”

“Tell me something about the convict, Mabel.”

“He has been here but a short time. One day I was in my hammock under the trees and I overheard a conversation between the convict and the gardener. I was astonished beyond measure—the rich, musical voice—the lofty ideals—I never heard such a conversation! I inquired and found that since he came there has been no disorder—before he came they had to be whipped—some of them were whipped every day. From what I have heard of his sweetness of character—his powerful spiritual influence, I would rather be the wife of such a man than ‘the first lady of the land,’ so called.” Mabel’s voice was tense with subdued feeling.

“What my husband would ask about such a man is whether he has taken the spunk out of his comrades or taken the cruelty out of Capitalism?”

“He has helped the men and he has made us more human.”

“What does Lew think of him, Mabel?”

“Lew never saw him—we cannot interest him in the man—he says it’s ‘nigger religion’ and flew into a violent passion when I expressed the hope that he would get some of it.”

When Mrs. Ruden found herself alone with Dinah,

she probed a little further into the story of the convict's life.

"Ah knows noffin' 'cept what Willyum says," Dinah said in answer to the first question. "Willyum, d' head gardner—he say 'Lijah's d' mos' religionist white man that he evah see."

"His name's Elijah, then?"

"Yes'm, dat's what dey calls him, but taint his real name."

"Have you seen him, Dinah?"

"Ah ain't seen him—but Ah done gone heer'd him clinkity clankity every mawnin' outside d' kitching."

"How do you know it's Elijah?"

"Dey don't 'llow none of de oders aroun'. Sometimes he's wid a niggah—mostimes wid hisself."

"Do the black folks like him?"

"Dey do an' den again dey don't. Bof black an' white like him at story tellin' an' candle lightin' time, but they caint steal even a pin head or a yam wen he's about."

Half a dozen of the guests had stayed over and when breakfast was announced fifteen people gathered around the table.

They were tired people, some of them were haggard and bore visible signs of the strain of the big night. The adjectives were soon exhausted in praise of the brilliant function. It was forced praise, of course, and did not deceive anyone. The Oglethorpes smiled and chatted as became the occasion, but to both of them something had happened over night that made them uneasy in each other's presenee. Both were determined that no sign should escape them of the turbulent waters of the inner life that seethed and boiled as they faced each other at breakfast. The keenest and most anxious

reader of faces was Mrs. Ruden. She watched her hostess closely. Whatever had happened had been forced upon her—that's how she put the situation to her own soul, and while it was not wholly satisfactory, it gave her a degree of complacency that surprised her at one time and shocked her at another. Over and over again she recalled the discussion of the morning, trying to find some clue to a hidden purpose. "If Mabel knows the facts about the note," she thought, "she is playing a game utterly foreign to her character."

She had no chance to compare notes with the Colonel. Of one thing she was sure; her visit had been shortened by months in the last twenty-four hours. No program had been formulated in her mind. She was feeling the social pulse and it was quickening her—bringing into play subtle elements at the depth of her nature. Occasionally the face of Stephen Ruden came into mental view—it was a face full of sorrow and pain, but it passed quickly away each time, and left no remorse. The thing that gave her most concern was the future. In this adventure in ethics there was only a present. Every time her mind went beyond that it found only the blackness of darkness, penetrated by a single ray of hope. The ray was the invitation of the Governor. There she saw salve for a wounded conscience, for her program at the Gubernatorial Mansion included a number of social reforms. Both the wound and the salve were as yet mere possibilities, however.

CHAPTER XVIII

GOD, THE LAW OF THE LAND AND "LONE STAR"

"I HOPE none of you good people are in a hurry to get away," the Colonel said, as the meal was about over. "We want to show off our new stock and if you would like, make up a riding party—we can provide mounts for all hands."

"How jolly!" said Miss Parker.

"We have several new attractions since most of you were here before—we have some Holstein stock, four Arab horses, an educated nigger and a convict in stripes who performs miracles—among the niggers!" All laughed save the lady of the Mansion.

"Lew, dear," she said, "who would suspect that you were Superintendent of a Sunday school?"

"I'm not, dear, I'm Superintendent Emeritus, now!"

"Well, the Superintendent Emeritus is failing in memory, for he has omitted a chief attraction!"

"What is that?"

"'Miss Tiffany.'"

"Ah, yes—that's a grave omission. Ladies and gentlemen, we have a vendor in buttons and cheap jewelry, who can discuss the Derelicts of Confucius or the—what is it, of Plato? Anyway, she is the white goddess of our nigger community and adds to the accomplishments of a divinity, clairvoyance and photography!"

There was another general laugh. "What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Ruden.

"Just what I say. What? Have you been so long here without a tilt with 'Miss Tiffany'?"

"I never heard of her before!"

"Well, now, we'll arrange a circus for this afternoon and erect a grand stand for the guests."

"Don't be foolish, Lew," said Mrs. Ogleshorpe.

"Why, my dear," replied the Colonel, "I haven't yet seen your John the Baptist, or is it Elijah the Tishbite?"

Breakfast over, several of the guests prepared for the morning ride through the woods. Mrs. Ruden and the host mounted on two of the most spirited horses, led the party.

They had no sooner left than Mrs. Ogleshorpe sent for the gardener and told him of the Colonel's joke, and warned him of the danger that he might attempt to carry it into effect.

"Has 'Miss Tiffany' been around lately, William?"

"No, madam, I have not seen her for several weeks."

"Have you seen any of her photographs, William, the ones she took of the convicts?"

"Yes, I have seen them all."

"Are they good?"

"As good as a professional could make."

"Well, look here, William, I want you to do something for me—I don't want you to ask me for a reason—I want you to do this as you do all your work—quietly and well. Let no human soul know why you do it—nor for whom."

"Does the Colonel know, madam?"

"The Colonel is a human soul, William! Besides he goes to Washington to-morrow, and will be there for a week."

"I am ready for your order, madam."

"Get 'Miss Tiffany' to take a group picture, next week. In the group I want Dinah's two children, Pansy Jenkins' baby and Delia Baker's girl. Delia has moved to Montgomery, but I will give you her address. Make an appointment with the old woman, and get your group. I will get others to be included in the picture. Let me know what day she will come. The group is to be photographed on the front porch, between the pillars."

"Very well, madam. I will let you know as soon as I make the arrangements—I will have to look the old woman up, but I know where I can find her in Montgomery."

There were four people in the riding party,—Miss Parker, a debutante, Bert Oglethorpe, the Colonel, and Mrs. Ruden.

After riding for about five miles through the woods the sharp sounds of an axe rang through the pines.

The Colonel stopped and addressed his guests.

"Now, just ahead is my turpentine camp, and as our Eastern friend has some peculiar ideas about labor, we will turn here in deference to her feelings."

"Now I beg of you not to return on my account—I suggest that you young people go on and we will canter slowly back, or wait for you."

The suggestion was a welcome one to the other two, and they rode on toward the camp.

"I wonder if 'Elijah' is out there?" Mrs. Ruden asked before they turned.

"He undoubtedly is—perhaps you would like to see him?"

"I really would, but I have so much to say to you in the few minutes we are alone, that I would rather postpone 'Elijah' for the present."

"I hope you know how nicely that suits me, Madeline?"

"The note, Lew—what about the note?" she asked, as if she had not heard his last remark.

"It's all right. Everything's all right if you but keep your nerve."

"My nerve's all right, it's my conscience that's out of joint!"

"A little exercise, my dear, will adjust that all right."

"A little exercise like last night? O! Lew—for God's sake arrange for some time when I can sit down and talk to you for hours—for ten years I have longed to be in vital touch with men who are not dreamers, but actual powers. Men of success. Now here I am and yet I know you not. I am thrilled by the senses at times, and frightened by them as often as I am thrilled. You have never tried to find out whether I have a soul or a mind—you are engrossed by the physical. You are a worshipper of physical beauty—it is your god and your heaven!"

"And sometimes my hell!" he replied immediately.

"Is this heaven to become hell also?"

"If you talk incessantly as you do, Madeline."

"You would prefer silence, then!"

He wheeled his horse to the left, saying as he did so, "There is a deserted camp here; it is of interest, let's look it over."

A ride of a hundred yards along an old grass covered lumber lane brought them to the camp. It was the scene of former activity in the denuding of the forest. The old shacks were crumbling in decay. Colonel Oglethorpe dismounted, but his companion sat still in the saddle.

"Dismount, my dear, and rest yourself a few minutes."

"No, Lew, I can't—I'm ill at ease here."

He was tying his horse to a tree as he spoke, and he continued as if he had not heard her.

"Lew, I beg of you—don't stop here!"

He took her horse's bridle rein, led him to a tree and tied him up.

Mrs. Ruden was in a flutter of excitement and kept up a steady chatter of protestation, but glided easily into his outstretched arms when her horse was secured.

At the edge of the cleared ground stood a wide spreading henlock and around its trunk hung a few rotten boards of what was once a seat. To this spot the Colonel led his half unwilling guest. The boards were not strong enough to bear their weight, so they sat down on the soft dry turf.

"Don't, for heaven's sake, begin to philosophize, Madeline," he said, "let us enjoy the few moments we are together—they are but a few."

"Woods have ears, Lew, and the day has a million eyes."

"Let them look, then," he answered. The words had scarcely escaped his lips when a noise startled him. The Colonel arose to his feet instantly.

"What! you here, Jenkins?"

The man accosted was within a few yards. He was a tall, thin man—rather unkempt and poorly clad. He carried a gun on his right shoulder and a cartridge belt around his waist. Before answering the salutation he lowered the gun from his shoulder to a slanting position under his left arm.

Madeline arose and gazed curiously at the intruder.

"Oglethorpe," said the man slowly, "it's some'at to

be thankful fur that after all, only a small slice ov these parts air gov'rn'd b' sich understandin' as ye've got."

"Your term hasn't fully cured you, Jenkins," Colonel Oglethorpe said, as he took Mrs. Ruden's arm and led her away. There was an undisguised sarcasm in the words—they were intended to close the brief interview. With the agile movement of an animal, Jenkins strode in front of the couple.

"Stand yer ground fur a jiffy—Ah'll tell ye jest how much Ah'm cured, Colonel."

The men glared at each other—there was movement, but it was arrested by the third person. She held the Colonel's arm. An oath escaped him, but Jenkins didn't hear him—he was talking and thinking too intensely to hear.

"Th' time wuz, Oglethorpe, when Ah'd hev' shot ye like a skunk ur a 'possum fur what Ah learned when Ah struck m' cabin last week—"

Colonel Oglethorpe made a convulsive plunge past the speaker, dragging his friend almost off her feet.

It was Jenkins' turn to move. He moved swiftly in front again, this time a few paces in advance.

"By the Almighty—ye'll stand in yer tracks an' hear me ur hear this!" He tapped the barrel of his gun with the forefinger of his right hand as he spoke. There was a fiendish scowl on his face and a determination in his voice that brooked no refusal.

"You d——d cracker!" hissed the infuriated planter.

"Wall, let it go at that—but hear a cracker's idee ov what's ahead of ye."

"This fellow's crazy," Oglethorpe said to his friend in an attempt to engross her while Jenkins was deliver-

ing his message, but her curiosity was aroused and she said: "Let him say what he has to say and let us get out of here!"

"Ef ye're through palaverin' Ah'll proceed." There was a moment's silence.

"Oglethorpe—Ah know nothin' about God—m' little gal says Ah'd better leave th' ease wi' Him, so Ah've promised her—but ef there be sich a person an' he ain't onto 'is job an' ef th' Law caint git no grip on a snake o' your kind, Ah'll lend them a hand—but as Ah'm gettin' kind'r down an' out they'll hev ter git a hustle on!"

He turned quickly around and was gone.

Mrs. Ruden was unable to speak and would have collapsed but for the strong arm around her waist.

From his saddle bag he took a small phial of whisky, a mouthful of which sufficiently stimulated her to remount her horse.

As they rode quietly along the Colonel made several unsuccessful attempts to engage his friend in conversation. He explained the case of Jenkins—he even joked over it.

"What are you thinking about, Madeline?" he asked.

"I was in Florence," she answered.

"Florence—Alabama?"

"No, in Italy." She was looking through the vista of the pines. Overhead what could be seen of the sky was like a strip of light blue ribbon—the great black tree trunks were splashed with sunlight—the air was balmy, clear and exhilarating. It was a day to enjoy—to make one fall in love with life.

"This air reminds me of Italy," she said, "but the episode in the clearing reminds me of Florence."

"How?"

"You haven't read 'Romola,' have you?"

"I read it when I was a boy."

"Yes, but you don't know the book—you don't remember the characters."

"I can't say that I do."

"Lew, do you know Jenkins' daughter?"

"I've seen her—she's a common cracker girl—rather pretty—why do you ask about her?"

"While Jenkins was speaking, Lew, my mind traveled to San Giorgio Hill in Florence to the hut of little Tessa."

He changed the subject abruptly, and was helped in his efforts by the clatter of horses' hoofs behind them.

"You said a while ago, Madeline, that you had so much to say—let's take a long walk in the woods before dinner to-night."

"I leave Wetumpka to-morrow morning, Lew, and I must pack up to-night."

"Impossible!"

"Impossible to stay a day longer—the mental atmosphere is already stifling me."

"Hello, Colonel!" yelled the Governor's son—just behind.

They wheeled their horses and faced the young people.

"Well, Bert, what did you discover in the camp?"

"We discovered your convict philosopher and were treated to some of his convict opinions."

"The devil you were! What were they?"

"I asked your foreman to point him out so that Miss Parker could see him, and he resented the request—"

"So did the foreman," added Miss Parker.

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Ruden.

"He read from a collection of poems—a sarcastic

skit on propertied interests—he's a dangerous character, Colonel, those men would give their lives for him!"

"Gad, I must look him over," the Colonel said, looking at Mrs. Ruden.

"I wish I had gone," she said, with a sigh.

"I wish we had," he replied slowly.

"Do you remember whose poetry he quoted?" Mrs. Ruden asked.

"Well, Miss Parker I am sure does," Bert replied.

"It was something like this," Miss Parker said:

"There's blood on your foreign shrubs, Squire,
There's blood on your horses' feet!"

She hesitated for a moment, and Mrs. Ruden continued:

"You have sold the laboring men, Squire,
Body and soul to shame,
To pay for your seat in the House, Squire,
And to pay for the feed of your game!"

"By Jove! You've got a corking memory, Auntie!" Bert said.

"That poem was composed by Charles Kingsley," she said. "I had a friend, once, who repeated it so often in my presence that it burned itself into my soul—my friend was for the laborer—I was for the squire!" She looked over her shoulder at the Colonel, and her look banished a frown that had gathered during the recital of the two verses.

"Give us the rest of it," the boy urged.

"Oh, much of it had merely a local English interest, but my friend always got excited when he came to the lines:

“When packed in one reeking chamber
Man, Maid, Mother and little ones lay:
While the rain pattered in on the rotting bride-bed,
And the walls let in the day.

Our daughters with base-born babies
Have wandered away in their shame;
If your Misses had slept, Squire, where they did,
Your Misses might do the same.

Can your lady patch hearts that are breaking
With handfuls of coal and rice,
Or by dealing out flannel and sheeting
A little below cost price?”

“That’s it,” Bert Oglethorpe said. “He ripped the whole business out and made me feel like a regular Bluebeard or Torquamada—by George!”

At luncheon, the young people supplied most of the conversation and the largest share of the appetite.

Neither the Colonel nor Mrs. Oglethorpe were at ease in each other’s presence. Mrs. Ruden sipped and nibbled through half the meal and then begged to be excused on account of headache.

After luncheon the guests departed and the host and hostess with Mrs. Ruden had Wetumpka to themselves.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PLANTER'S WIFE SEES A LIGHT

DUTIES of a national character demanded the Colonel's presence in Washington, and in view of an early departure, he made a tour of inspection around the industrial departments of the plantation.

He had not much trouble on the labor question. His neighbors sneered at the use of State convicts, and there were many hints of foul play. He managed to keep quite a number of negroes, but there were changes in the market of black muscles and the making of labor contracts was on a par, ethically, with the arrangement of secret rebates with the railroads—the crime was not in the act, but in its disclosure.

Two of the best men on the plantation were under ten-year contracts. They were both negroes and lived with their families in shacks near the stockade.

Someone had been making trouble in the case, for both of the men had asked for release from the contract, and although neither of them could read or write, they had shown some familiarity with the law.

When William, the head gardener, came, in answer to the Colonel's call, he was closely questioned about the two men.

"Both of them are determined to go—Colonel," William said—"they know the law."

"Look here, William," the Colonel said sharply, "I don't want to be told what two niggers know of the

law—I shall look to you to hold them to their contracts!”

“I can control the men, Colonel, if you can control the Federal Court.”

“Control hell! You control your department as Huggins controls the State convicts or find another place!”

“I shall do what I can, sir.”

“Where is Huggins?”

“In the new camp with the men—I thought you saw him this forenoon.”

“No, I went to the old camp with some friends.”

Master and man stood on the lawn—a white woman and a black ladies’ maid watched them from separate windows in the Mansion—each with intense interest and anticipation.

A messenger boy approached and handed the Colonel a telegram. He tore it open and read it.

“This is from Loeb,” he said, “the President wants to see me at once.”

“Now, look here, William, I shall have to take a train for Washington in an hour—I want to see Huggins at once, and want to leave a final word with you about those niggers!”

“Yes, sir.”

“I shall hold you responsible for their conduct! Do you understand?”

“I understand your meaning, Colonel, but—”

“No ‘but’ in it whatever—if they go, you go, too. That’s all. Not another word!”

Half an hour later, Huggins, the foreman of the men in chains, was on the veranda getting instructions.

“Huggins,” said the master, “there’s a yellow streak in William, and I can’t trust him. You’re a white

man and you've handled niggers and convicts until they're an open book to you. You know big Bill—and Joe?"

"Ah do, sir."

"They have ten-year contracts and want to go back on them—neither of them can either read or write—they will fall into the hands of some labor sharks—I want to save them—if William fails, you must step in—get them in debt—charge them with something, before my friend, the Justice, and if you are forced to it, use extreme measures—you understand!"

"Ah sho do, Colonel!"

"How about this white convict with nigger religion?"

"He's white, Colonel, white inside an' out—he sho is."

"I want to see him when I return—"

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Oglethorpe, seizing her husband by the arm, "Madeline insists on going to-morrow—now persuade her to stay a few days—she will stay if you urge her—I am sure."

"What's her hurry?"

"Oh! just a whim, I suppose."

Huggins moved away. Husband and wife looked into each other's eyes.

"What does this sudden call mean, Lew; will you be away long?"

"Just a conference—'T. R.' imagines that we are all breathlessly awaiting his summons—he may merely want to know the name of somebody in my district—somebody who has said something he doesn't approve of."

"Well, just tell Madeline—she must stay till you come back."

"Where is she now?"

"In her room—I'll tell her you want her to drive you to the depot—shall I?"

"Well, that will give me an opportunity to try, anyway."

"Madeline, dear!" Mrs. Oglethorpe called, with a rising inflection. There was no answer. Mrs. Oglethorpe ran upstairs and knocked at her door.

"Come in!"

"My dear, Lew wants you to drive him to the depot—he's called to Washington, and must be off in a few minutes—now don't refuse him."

"I really can't, dear, I'm feeling so poorly—really—"

"The air will brace you, dearie."

"Does he really want me to drive him?"

"He's waiting, dear, for your answer."

"W-e-l-l—very well—Mabel, I'll go—the air may do me good—I feel very poorly."

Half an hour later the Colonel and his guest drove away in a high new-fashioned dog cart drawn by a spirited bay mare.

They had scarcely disappeared, when William, in response to a hurried call, stood in the drawing-room awaiting the arrival of his mistress. He was not kept waiting long.

"Sit down, William," Mrs. Oglethorpe said, as she entered. She took a seat close beside him and said:

"Do you know that Jenkins met the Colonel in the woods to-day?"

"Yes, madam."

"Have you seen Jenkins?"

"I have."

"Look here, William. I believe you are a man with a soul, and I want you to aid me. I feel the very air

charged with vibrations of hate, lust, suspicion and injustice. You know what is going on—I don't ask you to be a traitor to your people, but when I tell you that in forty-eight hours my very soul has sickened—my conscience has become a flame of fire on social and industrial conditions around me, you will believe me and help me."

She waited for a moment. The black man was gazing intently at her.

"You suspect that I know some things, madam," he said.

"Yes—I am sure."

"Then I promise to help you, on one condition."

"What is it?"

"First, that justice is done to Dinah."

"My God! Do you know that, too?"

"I do."

"Where did you get that?"

"I know," was all he said.

Mrs. Oglethorpe grew pale and nervous and fell back in her chair. In a few minutes she regained her composure and said:

"My special need for you at this moment is this:

"I want you to outline a plan of work for the employees of this place that will rid us of what I know is going on—Lying, injustice and oppression. Write out a plan, make suggestions and I will have it typewritten and submitted to the Colonel."

"Pardon me if I look incredulous, madam."

"I am not thinking as much of the salvation of convicts and negroes as I am of my own, William. I want to be saved!"

"I will do it to-night, madam."

"Huggins has lost much of his brutality, these last

few weeks, but he has that brutal streak in him that makes him so valuable for business like this—I would not trust him.”

“He can be trusted to stand by the Colonel’s policy, madam, no matter what that policy is, but just at present he would almost give his life for ‘Elijah.’ ”

“That reminds me, William, it is Christmas day, and I think I’ll ask Huggins to bring up half a dozen of the best of his men to the house to-night and we will have some music and refreshments.”

“That’s impossible, madam.”

“Why?”

“There isn’t a convict on the place that isn’t alive with vermin!”

“Good heavens! Is that necessary?”

“It seems to the management cheaper than cleanliness.”

“Well, bring ‘Elijah’ up, anyway—if we get smitten it’s much less than we deserve.”

“You wouldn’t give that man unnecessary pain, madam, would you?”

“Certainly not.”

“He would rather cut a hand off than come.”

“Why?”

“He is a gentleman.”

“What is he in chains for?”

“Resisting an officer?”

“William, I have made half a dozen attempts to see this man and I have been put aside each time. There is some mystery in the case and I shall solve it.”

“Not being involved, madam, I have no personal interest in the matter.”

“I am grateful for your coöperation in what we have discussed and will wait with interest your plans.”

CHAPTER XX

'LIJAH OF THE STOCKADE

THE advent of Christ is celebrated in Alabama with fire crackers, giant caps and sky-rockets.

There was a half-holiday at Wetumpka Christmas day, and what was left over from the ball was served out as a token of good will to the convicts and servants. Young Oglethorpe provided the pyrotechnic display and the negro children furnished the fire crackers. There were several special privileges handed out to foremen, and they in turn were expected to loosen for a day the lines of discipline.

Several of the convicts requested Huggins to permit a light in the "long shed" until ten o'clock to enable "Elijah" to tell some stories he had promised.

Nightly, before lights out, it was the foreman's last duty of the day to see that every man was chained by the ankles to a ring in the wall. They asked that they be permitted to sit around the story teller until he had finished.

Huggins was a careful man, and took no chances. Knowing something of Mrs. Oglethorpe's change of mind and feeling at the time kindly disposed toward the men under his care, he consulted the lady of the Mansion.

"Why, of course," Mrs. Oglethorpe said. "And if you want any extra refreshments, tell the cook and she will furnish what is needed."

Huggins was relieved, and hurried to the shacks to announce the news.

When Mrs. Ruden returned from her drive to the depot she told her hostess that she would stay until the end of the week.

The conversation at dinner that night developed a plan by which, with the help of Huggins, the ladies might hear "Elijah" tell his stories.

It was with considerable reluctance that Huggins became part of the plan, for he feared this strange prisoner with a new fear—a fear unknown in the life of the stockade. At the end of the long shed stood a pine tree whose lower branches formed a tent-shaped arbor. Huggins thought of this and inspected it with a view to the accommodation of his guests.

It was but the work of a few minutes to arrange a place where two people could sit beneath the pine tree and see without being seen. The difficulty would be in the coming and going. Huggins needed William, but couldn't trust him in a case like this. He would raise objections—talk about "rights" and make as much of a fuss over it as "'Lijah" would himself. Besides, William was to be present and sing "coon songs," and perhaps tell stories, too. All this was explained to Mrs. Oglethorpe and her friend.

Convicts, negroes, servants and neighboring farmers watched the sky rockets as they exploded in fantastic showers beneath the stars and fell in black soot over the misery of the slaves—always intensifying the darkness of the night.

"Git in, boys," Huggins said as the last rocket burst and fell. .

There was a rattling of chains, a shuffling of feet, a few muttered exclamations and the gray friars of the stockade moved into their hole.

A table had been arranged near the north end of the

shed. A candle stuck in the neck of a bottle shed a yellow light over the scene and around the light gathered the men—sitting on their haunches, as close as they could get to the center.

“Do you want a new story, boys—or shall I tell one of the old ones?”

“Give’s th’ ol’ boy what beat the detective!” said one, “Jean Val Jean!”

“Shure, he’s the stuff.”

“He giv’ that twice’t,” said another—“let ’im give’s th’ little ol’ Russian shoemaker!”

The men looked like a class of school children—with their expectant faces and their clamor of choices.

“Boys,” said a new voice, in the door of the shed—all eyes turned toward the speaker. The yellow glimmer did not reach that far, but the speaker stepped forward and continued, “Ah’ll give you a pointer on his best yarn—If it’s the story ov what he’s bin up agin’ t’ defend th’ people—make ’m tell ye!”

“Lijah” stood erect and faced the speaker.

“‘Lone Star!’” he exclaimed.

“Jenkins!” exclaimed Huggins.

Jenkins strode toward the light and gripped his friend by the hand.

Huggins evidently resented the intrusion. He scowled at Jenkins, but the sight presented by the affectionate attitude of the men, as they looked at each other held him awestruck for a moment.

When he found his speech, he said:

“Ah spec’ ye know what th’ Colonel’d say ef he know’d ye wuz aroun’, Jenkins?”

“Ah sho do—Huggins, but since he’s hell on religion Ah thot there’d be no kick on a visit to an ol’ pal—on Christmas Day?”

"He'd expect me to order ye off the place, Jenkins."

"He sho wud—but he'd also 'speet me to tell ye to mind yer own damned perticular job at th' peril ov yer head!"

"'Lijah" interposed quietly, and Huggins subsided.

Every man ensconced himself to the best advantage and the story teller began.

Mrs. Oglethorpe and her friend sat on an extemporized bench beneath the pine tree and watched the proceedings through a rent in the boards of the shed.

It was a weird sight to both of them. There were thrilling moments for each, but neither uttered a word to the other until the central figure ventured to follow the suggestion of his friend in telling a little of his personal experience.

He hadn't spoken half a dozen words before Mrs. Ruden unconsciously clutched the arm of her friend—it was the grip of a man, and Mrs. Oglethorpe winced and jerked herself loose. She looked at her friend and saw that she leaned against the boards in a helplessly limp condition.

"Madeline!" she said—"You are faint—shall we go?"

Mrs. Ruden made a suggestive motion and her hostess took her by the arm and led her from beneath the tree. It was quite dark and neither could clearly see the other's face. When they reached the road leading to the house Mrs. Ruden stopped, freed herself and stood for a moment erect and rigid. Neither spoke.

Two unseen forces were at war in her heart. She had stopped at the edge of a crisis. It was a moment of indecision—only a moment. Then she sprang toward the Mansion and her hostess had to step lively to keep up with her.

Without a word of explanation, she excused herself and shut herself up in her room.

"Dinah," said Mrs. Oglethorpe, "I don't want you to spend much time in Mrs. Ruden's room to-night; if she wants you, say you have too much ironing to do. Do you understand?"

"Yes'm."

"Tell William I want him at once," she said to a colored boy in the hall. Ten minutes later William appeared.

"What time is breakfast served to the convicts?" was her first question.

"At half-past five, Madam."

"Have you seen 'Miss Tiffany'?"

"Yes, Madam, she is now in Mammy Pender's hut, having supper."

"For heaven's sake!"

"Why are you surprised, Madam?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing, William—I—I was thinking of the photograph—that's all."

"Everything is ready, Madam."

"Have you found out who 'Elijah' is?"

William hesitated for a moment. "I knew who he was when he came, Madam."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Why hasn't he escaped?"

"He doesn't want to escape."

"How strange! Is he conscious of the situation?"

"What situation?"

Mrs. Oglethorpe was silent for a moment.

"You do not trust me, William—I do not blame you, but I was trusting to your intuition—I will go farther—I will assume that you trust me, and run the risk."

"I honor your confidence, Madam, more than I can tell you."

"Then tell me frankly, William, what you know about this man, 'Elijah'!"

"He is the man who exposed your husband before the Board of Inquiry!"

"Exposed my husband—what do you mean?"

"Haven't you read or heard what happened at the hearing, Madam?"

"Not a word."

"Well, this man told the Board that your husband had taken money from some of the convicts—promising pardons and rehearings."

"Oh, my God! that cannot be true!"

They were silent. Mrs. Oglethorpe held tightly the arms of her chair.

"He didn't need the money," she said, in a low voice, as if speaking to herself—"it was habit, I suppose, the habit of squeezing the blood out of our fellow-beings—heir to a legacy of greed."

The telephone rang. It was the Governor, inquiring after the health of the family, and incidentally about Mrs. Ruden. Bert Oglethorpe was in the hall at the 'phone—his mother stepped softly to his side and whispered—"tell him your mother would like very much to have him call to-morrow forenoon, if he can possibly make it convenient."

She went upstairs slowly and returned a few minutes later with a cashmere shawl thrown loosely around her shoulders.

"I will go with you to the 'long shed,' William."

"Madam!"

She moved toward the door and the gardener followed. She tottered, but he dared not assist—she was physi-

cally weak with assistance at hand which it was impossible to utilize.

"Hadrn't you better ask your son to accompany you, Madam?"

"No—it would take a month to explain to him."

Stephen Ruden had completed his story, and was in the midst of Dickens' "Christmas Carol," when the Mistress of the Mansion arrived.

When she entered he at once arose and gave her the only chair in the shed.

The interruption dispelled much of the interest in the story and disconcerted the narrator. All eyes were on the lady of the plantation—and everybody was glad when the story was told.

"It's up t' W'llyum—now," Huggins said as Ruden stood with his back to the boards.

"I am in no mood to sing 'coon' songs," William said, "and of stories you have heard enough."

Mrs. Oglethorpe was keyed up in a high state of nervous tension and understood as clearly as if she had been told that few, if any, felt at home in her presenee.

There was a few moments' silence—it became painful as it lengthened. The silence was a hint that a foreign element had entered the "long shed."

The intruder understood. She arose from her chair, steadying herself by holding the edge of the table with one hand.

"I want to say something," she said, in a faltering voice.

"You men have chains on your bodies every day, and I have no doubt you consider yourselves slaves, but I want to tell you, on my honor, that I would rather wear a chain on my ankles than on my soul—I would gladly change places with any man here, if by the ex-

change I could tear away the heavy chains that seem to crush the very soul out of my body."

Wide-eyed, they watched the speaker, as she spoke with trembling accents.

"I have spoiled your program by intruding,"—she continued—"let me tell you how you can find your interest again. I overheard, one day, a conversation between two men who are here—I want them to give you and to give me the benefit of a full discussion of the topic they discussed that day."

Ruden and the gardener looked at each other.

The former was the first to speak.

"Your presence here is as unusual to them as it must be to you, Madam. It is kind of you to step over the line—we are not ungrateful, but simply surprised."

"Then perhaps I had better explain myself. Within a day, almost, I have changed my views of life—my new views bring me here. You are human beings with rights to life no less than my own. I shall respect those rights hereafter, and shall not be a party to unjust or unfair treatment."

There was a momentary hesitation—apparently Mrs. Oglethorpe was on the point of saying something—perhaps, more—but was uncertain as to its effect upon her hearers.

"No," she continued, "I think I will leave it unsaid—action speaks louder than words—good night, men." As she said this, she advanced toward Ruden, held out her hand and said: "Good night, Mr. Ruden!"

Stephen Ruden took the proffered hand, bowed and said quietly, "Good night, Madam."

The gardener followed her. "I want to go at once to

call on Mammy Pender, William," she said, as soon as they left the door of the shed.

"Very well, Madam," William said, in a somewhat reluctant manner.

"You would rather I wouldn't—isn't that so, William?"

"There is a verse of scripture, Madam, which says—'All things are lawful but all things are not expedient.' "

"Is it ever inexpedient to right a wrong?"

"It's usually a matter of method—a wrong method may double the original condition."

"You suspect revenge and your suspicion is well founded—your 'Miss Tiffany' is a spy, William, and I am going to tear the mask from her face!"

"I do not know, Mrs. Ogleshorpe, who 'Miss Tiffany' is, but I do know that she will have to be counted in when the day of reckoning arrives."

"The day of reckoning is here—that's why I want to meet her!"

CHAPTER XXI

A COMMUNITY OF FATHERLESS CHILDREN

MAMMY PENDER was the accredited clairvoyant of the neighborhood—her sayings had found their way into the newspapers of Montgomery, and among the black folk she was considered infallible in her predictions. Rich and poor consulted her as touching the future. Politicians consulted her before embarking upon doubtful campaigns—but her specialty was in the realm of the heart.

It was Mammy Pender who christened the little old woman who sold cheap jewelry—"Miss Tiffany." They were intimate friends and "Miss Tiffany" often slept in a corner of the old woman's hut.

When they reached the old woman's shanty, William lifted the latch, pushed the door open, and Mrs. Oglethorpe marched in. Pine knots were blazing on the open hearth and a candle lit the other end of the hut. On one side of the fire sat the old negress and opposite her sat Mrs. Ruden!

"Where's 'Miss Tiffany'?" asked Mrs. Oglethorpe, in a disappointed tone.

"She done lit out fo' d' city—Ah spees," the old woman said.

"You will not need her, Mabel," Mrs. Ruden said, rising to her feet as she spoke—"The shaft she was to help you prepare has already entered my soul—The humiliation you planned of having me photographed on your porch in the center of your husband's nine il-

legitimate children—black and white—is the most dastardly trick I have ever heard of one human playing on another!”

“Is it as dastardly as the deliberate theft of a husband—and the base betrayal of a friend?”

“Three black and two white women have borne children to your husband without disturbing your equilibrium very much. I don’t see why an extra woman or a few extra children should give you hysteria.”

The women glared at each other. Old Mammy Pender swayed back and forth on her stool, wringing her hands and moaning softly:

“O, Massa Jesus, mend yo’ licks an’ squeleh d’ ol’ debil in dese yere white folks!”

The gardener stood in the shadows of the hut—silent.

“I have but one thing more to say,” Mrs. Oglethorpe said, “relieve the place of your presence at the earliest possible moment.”

No reply was needed—none offered—she turned and left the hut and was followed closely by William.

The hostess considered it judicious to allow her guest to take the initiative if any mention was made, but the guest had avoided her friend and now that she had discovered the plot to humiliate her there would probably be no mention whatever.

When Mrs. Oglethorpe reached the Mansion she was in a desperate mood. The words of her guest had pierced her soul. The plan that failed was not wholly one of revenge. There was a salutary lesson involved, a lesson that was needed and which even now might be taught with effectiveness before the departure of the guest. The gardener had accompanied his Mistress to

the door and departed with a request to report a few hours later.

Mrs. Oglethorpe shut herself in her room giving orders that she was not to be disturbed. She sat in an easy chair revolving in her mind the happenings of the last forty-eight hours. She built up one plan of procedure after another—sometimes one plan hemmed in her friend—sometimes it included her own escape from an environment that was becoming more intolerable every hour—at another time her mind sought out a convict who bore a heavy cross of shame and ignominy that belonged to another.

At times she walked the floor—then she threw herself on her bed and found some relief in tears.

Someone came up the wide staircase three steps at a time. She knew the sound and opened her door—“Bert, dear,” she called—“come here a moment, I want you.”

Bert dropped into a chair in such a manner as to make the timbers of the house tremble.

“Hello, Mam,” he said impatiently, “what’s the matter?”

“I want to talk to you, dear.”

“Well, I’m here, ain’t I?”

“Yes, your body is here, but your mind is somewhere else—if you haven’t the courtesy or the patience to sit quietly and spend half an hour with your mother, you can go.”

“Aw, go on, Mam, don’t talk like a Methodist.”

A few simple questions on the meaning of life so irritated the youth that he moved restlessly from one side to another—perching himself now on one arm of the chair and then on the other.

“What would you say, Bert, if to-morrow we should

strike those hideous chains from the ankles of those convicts in the 'long shed'?"

"Gee wiz, Mam—you're dippy, you sho are!"

He looked blankly into his mother's face and watched the tears gather in her eyes.

She was silent for a moment. He grabbed her in his arms—kissed her cheeks and said:

"Take some Bromo Seltzer, Mam, and go to bed—there's a dear."

The next moment he was testing the strength of the stairs in his descent, whistling gaily, as he descended.

When the gardener arrived, Mrs. Oglethorpe was too tired to see him; besides, she had a plan worked in her own mind. A plan of protest and reformation which would at least lighten the burden that weighed so heavily on her own soul.

At five o'clock next morning Mrs. Oglethorpe was called, and half an hour later she was on her way to the "long shed."

Her appearance threw the camp into consternation. Huggins attempted to lead her aside, but she wouldn't be led.

"Huggins," she said, "I am going to take breakfast with these laborers this morning and I will not permit you to interfere."

Huggins offered profuse apologies, hinting that if he had known, etc.

"Furthermore, Huggins, in the absence of my husband, I will take charge of this plantation. I have money invested here, as well as he has,—do you understand?"

"Y-e-e-s, Mam," he answered slowly.

The white men sat in one group and the negroes in another. The chains were adjusted to their ankles and

they were being served with breakfast. Everybody sat on the ground with a tin plate and a tin cup in his lap. Several men came with buckets of coffee, trays of pork and grits. Grits is crushed stewed corn. It is the cheapest form of food for man and beast and is extensively used in stockades.

Mrs. Oglethorpe demanded a cup and plate. They were reluctantly handed to her and she sat on the ground by the group of white men. She had desired to sit beside Ruden but he was surrounded by half a dozen men who would have fought for a place beside him.

"Mr. Ruden," Mrs. Oglethorpe said, "I would have invited you to breakfast with me, up at the house, but knew you would refuse, so I have done the next best thing, I have come to take breakfast with you and these men who labor with us."

"I am very much complimented, Madam," Ruden said. "We at least will feel assured that you know our bill of fare."

She sipped the coffee, but the fat pork and grits lay untouched on her tin plate.

Her next move was of a still more sensational character.

"Huggins, I want these men to work without chains to-day," she said, and Huggins looked as if he had suddenly been stricken dumb.

"Th' Colonel—" he got no further. "Yes, I know," she broke in, "I know all about it—the Colonel is absent—I am present and in charge. I have just explained that they are to work without chains to-day!"

"Very well, Mam—it's a go, an' ye're up agin' th' responsibility ov it."

"Yes, I'm responsible."

Breakfast over, the deputy under Huggins proceeded to take the chains from the legs of the men. As soon as Ruden was free, Mrs. Oglethorpe took him to one side and asked him if he was aware of the presence of his wife! "Oh, yes, and knowing you in your new rôle as I do I may tell you that I know that she is aware of my presence."

"You have friends here, then?"

"Yes."

"I want to send you with a letter to the Governor to-day, and the answer will probably obviate the necessity of your return—I do this as a mere act of justice."

"Don't think me ungrateful, Mrs. Oglethorpe, but that would be impossible for me—I will not object, however, if you can accomplish the same by other means."

"Big Bill and Joe are both absent," the gardener told Huggins, and Huggins swore but misunderstood the full import of the announcement. When it was explained that they had struck out, after supper Christmas night, and had not been seen since, he ordered the bloodhounds out at once, and in ten minutes, with a couple of helpers, he was after his men.

Mrs. Oglethorpe was so engrossed in conversation with Ruden that she didn't know what had happened until Huggins' deputy ordered the men out to work. Big Bill and Joe were the best teamsters on the place. They were the ten-year contract men who had been getting some information on the validity of their contracts, and whom the Colonel had ordered Huggins to hold at any cost.

"This man will stay to do some work around the house," Mrs. Oglethorpe told the deputy, when he ordered Ruden into the big box wagon which stood ready to move off.

CHAPTER XXII

A WOMAN'S VENTURE IN ETHICS

THE men were to spend the day in the turpentine camp—it took four big wagons to carry them. Before they moved off, Mrs. Oglethorpe addressed them:

“Men,” she said, “I have stricken the chains from your limbs on my own responsibility, because I believe you will work easier and because, too, I believe you will not betray my confidence,—I will take dinner with you to-day in the woods.” The men, black and white, uncovered their heads while she was speaking. When she finished, the teams jogged off through the woods and the lady of the Mansion and the convict were left alone.

“You have suffered, Mr. Ruden.”

“My Class, the Working Class has suffered, is suffering.”

“What on earth can one do in the face of such appalling conditions?”

“Wake up, as you have done, and awaken others.”

“Pardon me—how did you learn of Madeline’s presence with us?”

“I knew it the day I came here—I know about the friction and the cause of it—the only thing that I either need or want to know is about the health of my children.”

“I can tell you, Mr. Ruden, they are well and happy.”

“Thank you—I have communicated with them but circumstances prevented them from communicating with me.”

"I understand."

"Tell me in a word or two, if you don't mind," Ruden said as they walked slowly toward the Mansion, "What led to your awakening, Mrs. Oglethorpe?"

"Perhaps I can indicate it in a few words, but it would take a volume to tell it adequately. There is a rustic bench behind that magnolia tree, let us sit down and talk for awhile."

"But the servants?"

"You will be gone, to-morrow, and we may never see each other again."

They walked in silence to the bench and sat down.

"I was resting in that hammock over there one day, and I overheard a conversation between you and the gardener. That gave me the first real period of introspection I ever had. What you said, made me think. I rebelled against being made to think by a black servant and a white convict. I went on with the preparations for the ball. We—Madeline and I—had specialists here to prepare us for the occasion. I aided in the making of her dress. I arranged the bodice so that her finely shaped bosom would enamour every man who looked upon it. All that invention, artifice and skill could do to charm men. I have done that for twenty years or more. I have loved to be admired. My life has been spent in the cultivation of social and physical charm. An admiring crowd was my heaven, and to be alone, with no one to admire or flatter me, was my hell. My real awakening occurred right here in this arbor on Christmas Eve, when I saw with my own eyes the result of my labor.

"I had forgotten that physical charm is a two-edged sword—I expected her to charm the Governor and other prominent guests, but when I saw my husband fold her

passionately in his arms and make her faint with kisses, it was as if someone had pierced me with a dagger!"

She expected some show of surprise or disgust, but he was looking off through the trees, and merely turned his head when she ceased talking.

"You seem so indifferent and unmoved, Mr. Ruden!"

"It's only because I stood over there, in the shadows myself, watching the scene you have just described!"

"My God! and you saw it also."

"Yes, and I knew you and she were listening to me last night, so I took the opportunity to reveal my identity."

"What a devil's world it is!" she said meditatively.

"You are mistaken," he said, "It is God's world, and the devil, on whose shoulders we lay our deficiencies is merely part of God's good plan twisted out of its true relation."

"Oh, that I could talk to you for a whole day!"

"You can think for a whole day—think of the crushed lives of these chained slaves—think of millions of toilers damned in the world to be slaves of idlers, parasites and thieves—think how you can rightly relate yourself to the problem, and the best of all the ages will rally to your support."

"Forgive a woman's logic," she said, "but so many questions are crowding me that I cannot get them out in any order whatever—how do you feel toward your wife, now, after what you saw?"

"Madeline yearned for years for social life—I could not give it to her—she is now tasting it—she will find herself just as you have—there must come an awakening—when it comes, she will be ready to sit down and look facts calmly in the face."

The mist had lifted from the valleys and the sun was

pouring in upon them through the trees. It was inevitable that they should part—perhaps forever. A strange caprice of fate had brought them together and the meeting resulted in a mutual desire to meet again. The spot where they sat had been but a few hours previously a rack on which their souls were torn. It was now a hallowed spot, where a gleam of hope came to each—hope for the comrades he was leaving behind, in chains—hope for the expression of a newly awakened soul!

“How shall I acquaint myself with the movement, the very name of which I have hated—?”

“Socialism?”

“Yes.”

“Reading the Bible isn’t religion, nor can an appetite be appeased by studying a cookery book. The book of life lies open at your hand—study the facts of your own industrial environment and relate them to life—the highest life. Never mind names, doctrines or dogmas—they will be at hand when you are ready for them.”

“Good-bye—” she said, extending her hand.

“Good-bye, Comrade,” he replied, as they clasped hands.

Ten minutes later Mrs. Oglethorpe was in communication with the State’s Executive.

“It was too late,” he said, to grant a pardon for an individual, but he would recall the list issued on Christmas Eve, and add the name to the list, as though the omission was an oversight.

“I can assume that the name is now added, then?”

“Yes.”

William was on hand to carry out instructions regarding the departure of the guests. Mrs. Ruden, having severed all amicable relations with her hostess, made it

known to the gardener that she would like to be driven to the city in the early afternoon.

Her husband expressed a desire to take advantage of Huggins' absence and take dinner with the men in the turpentine camp.

When the camp bell rang, announcing the dinner hour, Mrs. Oglethorpe was on hand and sat down with the men. A table had been arranged with a long bench on each side and a seat at one end, for the hostess.

Ruden sat at her right hand and the deputy on her left. There was some embarrassment and much deference among the men. The brutal levity and vulgar exchange of obscene language was well under control. The intuitive faculty is highly developed in such men, and they estimated the presence of a woman at its full value. After dinner, Mrs. Oglethorpe arose and said:

"Men, one whom you have called 'Elijah' is soon to leave us, and for his sake, we are glad. I want him to leave with us a message that will help us to live."

There was a loud clapping of hands. Ruden said: "I can only put myself in your place, boys, and tell what I would do, if I had to stay here—life in a camp like this is, for men, less than the life of the beasts. We work harder and we do not have as good care.

"The State of Alabama robs us and hands us over to a planter to squeeze out whatever manhood is left. There is little hope. Mrs. Oglethorpe has made a splendid move, but she will be laughed at by all who live by the sweat of other people's faces, and I am afraid, will be sneered at by some of the men for whom she makes these sacrifices. Under these conditions, I would seek help where I would be most likely to find it—in religion. It is almost a waste of time to talk politics to you men, you are despunked—the manhood is washed out

of you, and not one in a thousand of you would vote against the lash that cuts the flesh of your backs. I can only say, therefore, that while I have been with you I have been able to bear the conditions by fixing my mind on things that are beautiful, pure, clean and noble. Mrs. Oglethorpe has just discovered you—now let her add what she can to your lives on the plantation. I shall think often of you all in the years to come, and I shall hope that you are as kind to each other as you have been to me.”

He did not say “Good bye.” There was no farewell, no hand-shaking—he walked quietly into the pines and they saw him no more.

Mrs. Oglethorpe was driven back in a buggy—she expected to overtake him on the road, but he avoided her.

William helped to rehabilitate Ruden.

When he left the gardener's cottage he might have been taken for a business man. He was dressed in a dark gray suit with slouch hat and walking stick.

Under his arm he carried a small bundle containing a blue flannel shirt and a pair of overalls.

CHAPTER XXIII

A MAKER AND BREAKER OF CODES

COLONEL OGLETHORPE'S interview with the President lasted but ten minutes, but he spent ten days among the Southern congressmen, at their homes in the South, discussing the subject of it. The last person interviewed before he returned to Wetumpka was the Governor of the State. That he had been nerve strained to a very high degree was evident the moment he entered his home—he had little to say.

He divested himself of his overcoat in the hall and went in search of his foreman. There was something unusual in his manner, but nothing disappointing in it to his wife. She, too, had been considerably strained.

"Hello!" was his greeting to her. "Hello!" she answered coldly, and they went their ways from the hall—each rather glad to escape the other.

Half an hour later, when he entered his wife's room without knocking, a change had taken place in his temper. His rather negative impatience had assumed the shape of a positively angry mood.

"Huggins has just been telling me of the idiotic things you have been doing in my absence," he said, "and I want to find out whether you are crazy or not?"

She was lying on a sofa near the window. She turned her head toward him, and for a moment looked at him inquiringly. Her silence added to his anger.

"I have no objection to your charity business," he continued in a harsh and excited manner—"but when

you sit down to eat with niggers and convicts you disgrace your station in life and mine, too, and I don't propose to stand for it!"

Mrs. Oglethorpe arose to a sitting posture on the sofa.

"Disgrace—" she got no further.

"Yes, disgrace!" he shouted. "And the next time you interfere in my business affairs don't be surprised if my hired servant tells you to mind your own business!"

She arose to her feet—full of feeling—livid with indignation. She made several attempts to speak, but he always interposed with a harsh sound and drowned her voice. He became abusive—it wasn't wholly a personal matter, and she, in a vague manner, understood that. He was relieving himself of a volley of pent-up feeling, that had been growing larger every day since his visit to the White House. When the force of his abuse was spent he turned toward the door. By a quick movement she faced him, with her back close to the partly closed door.

"I want you to hear what I have to say, now," she said. She was pale and trembling, but there was a look of scorn in her face that held him—startled him.

"My right to humanize your brutal affairs is based on the fact that half the capital invested belongs to me!" was her first remark. He was taken aback but stared loose-jawed at a woman he had really never seen before. There was no opportunity to reply, the words had scarcely escaped her lips when the second thrust came.

"Perhaps I am insane, and perhaps Jenkins is, also. I understand you have had him so adjudged—but the community—the country isn't, insane, and sooner or later, the rottenness, the murder, theft, miscegenation and cruelty that is warp and woof of your industrial

process will be made known—the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they *grind!*”

“What the —— do you mean?” he hissed.

“Just what I say.”

“By ——! if a man uttered those words he would pay the penalty with his life!” He shook his clenched fist in her face. Without a tremor, she continued:

“Yes, I know,—you have been coward enough to kill for less than that, but I have not finished yet.”

“But I have finished listening to your hysterical ravings.”

She raised her voice and prepared to resist, if need be, his exit.

“If it is impossible to save you, I shall save myself—I shall wash my hands of you—and your mode of life—I shall refuse to be a mere member of your harem, with but the empty honor of a social status to distinguish me from negresses and defenseless girls who have borne you more children than I have!” There was a stinging bitterness in the words that stung him to the heart. He seized her by the throat and threw her to the floor with an oath. He rushed into the hall, took his hat from the rack and went out into the yard.

William was sent for, in a hurry. Huggins was called also. They were told that no “sentimental humbug” would be permitted for a moment.

For ten days the convicts had laid down to sleep without being chained to the wall. Their food had been served in decent shape and they had been treated as human beings. The proprietor brought the new *régime* to an abrupt end, by a peremptory order, and the hope engendered for ten days gave way to despair and hate.

“Look here, Huggins,” the Colonel said, after he had given the reactionary order—“don’t take this fellow

they call 'Elijah' out to the camp to-morrow—leave him down here in the shack—I want to see him alone."

"He's gone, sir!"

"Gone?"

"Yes'r, th' Governor released him, I think—tho' I'm not dead sho—on the request of th' Missus."

"Oh, hell—he's the beast that has raised a rumpus that has taken me ten days to straighten out. Now he's gone to continue his lying elsewhere!"

"Yere's Willyum a'comin', sir—'e knows, Ah 'spect, whar 'e is."

"Why wasn't I informed about the transfer of that convict—William?"

"Which convict, sir?"

"You know d——d well which convict—the cracker who worked the religious game so perfectly on all of you!"

"He was a State convict, sir, and was subject to State law—the Governor paroled him."

"Can he be found?"

"I think he can be located, sir."

"Then put Huggins on the trail."

"May I venture to suggest to you, sir, that there's trouble brewing over the case of Big Bill and Joe?"

"What do you mean?"

"Their families have left their shacks and gone—I know not where."

"When did they go?"

"The day after their husbands were brought back and put in irons."

"What's the trouble, then?"

"The Federal Authorities—I think—are investigating the cases."

"Look here, you men, get back those nigger women,

or get to hell out of here—both of you!” The men were silent. They knew what that meant. Big Bill and Joe had been brought back—charges preferred before a justice of the peace who was an employee of the master, and they were imprisoned for six months each. The imprisonment, of course, was in the Oglethorpe stockade. In addition to the imprisonment they were both tied to logs and whipped with a shingle on the soles of their bare feet—fifty lashes each. The imprisonment was for breach of contract, and “obtaining money under false pretenses.” The whipping was for infractions of the stockade rules.

As long as they were permitted to spend one night a week with their wives and children, the men could be controlled, but Southern planters know that with wives and children gone the men would often suffer death rather than submit.

“Get out every deputy in the place—alarm every sheriff—and get those niggers back at once!” was the final order, and he left the men looking at each other in consternation.

“Just a moment, Colonel—” said William, as he followed him.

“I have no time to bandy words with you—obey my orders—then I’ll listen to whatever you have to say.” He didn’t stop—but William walked by his side and informed him as he walked, that as far as he was concerned, his service for the Colonel was at an end. The Colonel stopped, looked at the black man for a moment—

“You ungrateful beast of a nigger!” he said. “If I had a horsewhip I would teach you a lesson you wouldn’t forget in a hurry.”

“I’ll furnish you one,—stop a moment—Huggins!” shouted William. “Huggins!” Huggins heard and

surmised trouble—he came up to the men on a trot, but before he reached them the Colonel had the black man by the throat. It was but for an instant, however. He wrenched himself loose, and with a blow the crash of which could be heard a hundred yards away, he knocked the planter on his back. Huggins made a show of defending his master—but it was only a show. He knew his man and feared him. Oglethorpe groped for a revolver, but it was missing. He yelled for Huggins to hand him his, but the negro was ready.

“All right, Huggins, hand him one—I’ll wait till he gets it and then I’ll rid the earth of a cowardly cur who doesn’t possess the morals of a dog—hand it to him!” As he spoke he drew his Colt revolver and stood erect and ready.

Huggins hesitated. Oglethorpe rose to his feet foaming at the mouth. The sound of wheels was heard in the direction of the stables—when the planter spoke he could scarcely be heard, for the coachman was driving at full speed toward the house.

His master called him, but he drove on, pulling up at the side door—another moment, and Mrs. Oglethorpe had seated herself beside the driver and they were off. The Colonel shouted, but there was no response. He rushed into the house, hissing as he left the two men: “I’ll see to you, nigger, in a few minutes.”

His first act was to telephone for the sheriff and a posse, then to the chief of police, instructing him to arrest the coachman on sight, and return the horse and buggy. Then he went upstairs, furnished himself with a revolver—loaded and primed.

A note lay on his table—it was in his wife’s handwriting—he was not in a mood to read any farewell or sentimental missives. He picked it up, then threw it

down again, and passed on. When half way down the stairs he returned, opened the note and read:

"Henceforth you can communicate with me through my lawyers, Blakely and Dorman.

"I shall sue for a divorce, naming but one co-respondent—a negress. It was a convict in your stockade who pointed out to me the fact that although free love and unbridled lust had resulted in three million human beings who are neither black nor white, that it was not on record that any white woman had ever named a black woman as a co-respondent. In establishing this precedent I shall not only atone for my sex, but I shall also recognize the black mother of your children as a woman—a human being, like myself.

"MABEL."

He tore the note to shreds and threw it on the floor with a muttered curse.

An hour later, the sheriff and his posse arrived. They were taken into the planter's office where a bottle of champagne was opened and over its contents the affair diseussed.

"He's too good a nigger to dispense with, but I must punish him somehow," the Colonel told the sheriff.

"Lock him up for a week," the sheriff suggested.

"No, I'd lose him."

"Then let Jim, here, give him a thrashing." Jim was a deputy of large physieal proportions and nodded assent to the suggestion. While they were talking the chief of poliee was announeced. He had left the coachman in the lock-up and had driven the buggy home himself.

He was invited to join the champagne party in the office. In the hall, alone, he described the arrest. He had permitted the coachman to drive Mrs. Oglethorpe to the depot, where she had boarded a train for Atlanta.

The sheriff and the chief were taken apart and told, in strictest confidence, the cause of their summons to Wetumpka. It was scarcely necessary for a member of Congress to do that, but there was every prospect that he would need them more in the future than he had in the past, and champagne and cigars and a confidential chat made them somewhat more "solid" than the mere hope of the Federal patronage at the Colonel's disposal; he knew his men.

When it was time for Jim, the deputy, to pay his respects to his unknown opponent, the Colonel had changed his mind again, and suggested a postponement. The point that he pressed, however, was the return of the wives of Big Bill and Joe. He offered a reward of a hundred dollars for their delivery or information locating their present whereabouts. The butler brought in some sandwiches and another bottle of champagne and the officials departed, with the feeling that they had either been at a funeral or a wedding.

As soon as he was alone, the Colonel ordered a highball to steady his nerves, and a little later a second, in order to give Huggins some orders that required courage as well as nerve to give.

He had long desired to make better, or at least separate provision for the white convicts, but not until a black man had knocked him down did he feel that he could afford to make the change. Huggins was called again.

"Get the old barn ready for the white men to-night, Huggins," he said. "I have been thinking of making the change for some time—it is but the work of an hour—let it be done right off!"

"We will have to have the blacksmith, sir, to put the iron rings in the wall."

“Get him, then—get him at once—make no delay! The thing will have to be done to-night!”

It was nearly midnight before the white convicts were marched out, sixty of them, to their new quarters. This was Colonel Oglethorpe’s tribute to his race, as he smarted under the sting of his wife’s note. Sixty-five negroes were left in the filthy “long shed.”

The white men did not seem to appreciate the compliment paid them. They grumbled a good deal and acted sulkily as they were ordered around in the progress of the transfer.

They knew they would miss the singing. White men never sing in captivity—black men sing under all circumstances and in all conditions. Every night, around the camp fire the black men sang the slave songs of their race. They gave a spiritual wind-up to the slave labor of the day.

Colonel Oglethorpe walked the floor of his chamber until a very late hour. He was utterly unconscious that there was anything wrong with what his wife called the “industrial process.” He had never known any other life than that of master and slave. The growing thought of the world that both could be abolished was unworthy of serious consideration to him. Indeed, he had scarcely heard it hinted at. The *status quo* was a thing that as a religious teacher he had always connected with God and the moral order of the world.

With his personal life he was not so vague. He knew he had violated his own canons—but then, his violations were mere manifestations of a weak will—he knew he had that, but so had all the best men and women of his acquaintance.

“Why should she fly in the face of customs as old as Adam?” he asked himself. “Why didn’t she do as

she has so often—get angry for a day and then make up again?” As he paced the floor this question came to him: “If your wife had borne children to other men, both white and black, would you go on living with her?”

“Of course not,” was the ready answer. “But then there is one code for women and another code for men.” It was unthinkable to him that a woman should be either a code maker or a code breaker—those things were the prerogatives of men—“women’s sphere” was the home. As a last resort he drugged himself with brandy and fell into a stupor, undressed, on his bed.

At four o’clock in the morning the establishment was aroused by cries of “Fire!”

The old barn, that had been tenanted but a few hours with the white convicts was enveloped in flames. The upper floor was filled with forty tons of hay, and when those first to the rescue arrived the entire upper story was about to cave in. An axe soon smashed a hole in the side wall, but out through it shot a tongue of flame that scorched the rescuers and drove them back. A minute later the hay, hay loft and roof, came down with a crash, and the flimsy side walls bulged as if by the force of a mighty blow pipe. Not a cry was heard from within,—not a groan. The burning walls were torn apart—at the risk of life, but not a sign was visible. It was thought at first that the men had escaped and set fire to the place, but in the course of a few hours the chains were pulled out, and with each link a charred and blackened bundle of bones, all that was left of sixty human beings—sixty-one, rather, for one unchained bundle lay near the door—it was the deputy, who, it was supposed, had been choked with smoke and unable to escape. The holocaust was complete. No

tears were shed, no hearts in pain, for these men were outcasts, whom the State had handed over to the wheel of labor at so much per head.

Colonel Oglethorpe could not be aroused from his stupor until the family physician was called. When the situation was explained, he said: "Too bad, send an account of it to the Convict Board and get sixty men to take their places."

For a week, straggling visitors from various parts of the State came to look for the "remains" of relatives. They were all poor people, of course, and were shown a mound in the woods, where the charred bones were deposited. There was an Associated Press dispatch an inch long in the papers, a few letters of inquiry, and the thing was over.

A week after "the destruction of the barn," as the holocaust was called, Llwellyn Oglethorpe, Jr., of Colonial University, made an unexpected call at the Wetumpka Mansion.

"I knew there was something wrong, Dad," he said, as he kissed his father in the hall.

"Why did you come without a note or a telegram, boy?"

"Well, the fact is, Dad, I got into a peck of trouble and left."

"What was the nature of the trouble?"

"I picked up a chance acquaintance—"

"A woman, eh?" broke in the father.

"Yes—a girl with a pretty face, but no education—I went farther than I ought to have gone, but when they tried to put the screws on, and chain me to her, I broke away and quit!"

"What's your next move?"

"Well, I want to settle down to business. I don't

care for a parchment certificate—it's the man that counts these days, so I'm in for business—I'll take a foreman's job—anything!"

Huggins put the young man to work as superintendent of the turpentine still—situated a mile and a half in the woods. Here he worked by day, and by night he ran the gamut of the clubs and the homes of the young women of the city's smartest set.

The Colonel had a caller one day, a few weeks after his son's return from college. It was the United States Marshal for the Southern District of Alabama. As a Member of Congress, he was saved the humiliation of an arrest, but was notified of a hearing before the United States Commission on a charge of peonage. The Colonel was indignant, but promised to attend in person. "Of course, it will be *sub rosa*, Colonel," the Marshal said, "and we will see that the press doesn't get hold of it."

The result of the hearing was somewhat disconcerting to the planter, for a charge was found and given to the Grand Jury. The charge was based on the ten-year contract men and the forcible return to the camp and subsequent whipping of the men's wives.

CHAPTER XXIV

'LIJAH FINDS A CAVE OF ADULLAM

WHEN Ruden left Wetumpka, he walked to Montgomery and found a furnished room in a rear tenement off the main street. The address of this obscure lodging house had been furnished by his friend, the gardener. He had four dollars and fifty cents. He paid three-fourths of the amount for the room for a week, and with the balance provided himself with food, paper and pencils. He estimated that his provisions would last him ten days.

His room was on the fifth floor back. His landlady rented the room on the assumption that he was a day laborer and would only occupy it during the night.

He compromised with her by offering to do the necessary cleaning himself. He offered also to pay for extra oil if he burned more than was the custom. He felt it necessary to tell her just what he was doing, and why he was in such reduced circumstances. This was a mistake in his judgment, for she almost worried herself sick on account of his food. Every morning she asked him with a new tenderness in her voice, whether he wouldn't have a cup of good warm coffee?

"It will only be wasted," she would say entreatingly, but he steadily and courteously refused, telling her that if he ever needed a cup of coffee he would surely ask for it.

His provisions held out eleven days. Then he had to explain matters to the landlady. She was so over-

joyed at the prospect of helping him that for a minute she was unable to reply.

"If you'd only be sort o' social wi' us, mister, we'd be more'n pleased to hev ye fur a year!"

"I have been very busy," Ruden said, "but I have sent off my first piece of work to New York and I am taking it easy for a day or two, and will be delighted to meet your husband and have a talk when it's convenient for you."

"We're not eddycated folks, mister, but we-uns know when we meet them as are."

"Oh! Education cuts no figure here—we are just human folks."

"M' husband an' me hev been on th' point ov askin' yer advice several times—but we never liked, because ye were so quiet and busy like."

"Well, while I am here—I wish you would feel free to call upon me for anything I can do."

"Then ye expect to go?"

"In a few weeks, perhaps it may be longer—but what was it you thought I could advise you about? If I can serve you I shall do so gladly."

"Well, mister, to tell th' truth, it's about yerself!"

"Oh! Well, what is it?"

"Ain't you a stockade man?"

"Well, I was a conviet, but I have served my time."

She suddenly left the room, returning in a few minutes. "Ain't that you?" she asked, as she held up a photograph of himself in stripes and chains.

"Yes," he said, "'Miss Tiffany' took that. How did you get hold of it?"

"We have a roomer—she's a bit odd—"

"It must be 'Miss Tiffany'!" he exclaimed.

"Her name's Hawkins—Mistress Hawkins, sir."

"When is she at home?"

"Since you've been here—she comes in late and goes away early."

"At any special time?"

"No, ye cain't never tell."

Ruden pondered. A score of times, he remembered, she had eluded him at Wetumpka. He recalled how William, the gardener, had failed to help him get an interview with a woman who, though old and gray-haired, was actively engaged in doing things around a stockade that put her under suspicion of the men of more than average intelligence.

"Well," Ruden said, finally, "I would like to meet her some time and if you can help me, I'll be grateful to you."

A few days later, the landlady informed Ruden that Mistress Hawkins was to have a guest and had asked her to prepare supper for them. But Ruden tried to dismiss the suspect from his mind.

One day he was walking up a side street, when he noticed in a shop window, a copy of the *Appeal to Reason*. It was spread out to display a cartoon. He entered and asked for a copy, as he fumbled for a nickel. "It ain't fur sale," the man said, "but ye can look it over."

A small group sat around a stove in the back end of the store. They were watching Ruden, and had evidently stopped the conversation to hear what he had to say.

"Do you carry a red card?" he asked the proprietor.

"Ah sho do," he replied. "Whar do yo' stand in sich a showdown, stranger?"

"I am a member of Local New Oxford," he said, "but I've lost my card." The words had scarcely es-

caped his lips, when a woman stepped out from the stove corner and said in a broad Southern drawl:

"Ah hope ye're enjoying yer journey in th' South." Ruden took the extended hand. It was "Mistress Hawkins" of the boarding house and "Miss Tiffany" of the stockade.

It was the first time he had looked into her face. Her hair was white—her face was wrinkled and yellow. She wore an ill-fitting hat and clothes that seemed a generation old.

"No," he said, "I don't think I have."

"Waal, ye'll enjoy th' results of it, Ah've no doubt."

Ruden was conscious that the men in the back of the store were watching and listening—an uncanny feeling crept over him. He was suspicious and uneasy.

"I think you are a spy," he said in a low tone.

"Waal, yer kind o' generous t' lower yer voice whin ye accuse me!"

"You are an unsocial neighbor, too," he said, in the same tone. "You live on the same floor with me—your drawers are stuffed with my photographs and yet you never asked me to tea—nor to call."

There was a vein of humor in these words.

"W-a-al," she drawled, "since ye've ax'd yerself, whin will ye come?"

"I'll join your other guest when he comes."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, as she looked steadily at him, "then Ah'll send ye a formal invite—good bye!"

She picked up her basket—a common market basket, pushed her arm through the handle, and went out of the door at a lively pace—lively for an old woman.

Ruden accepted the invitation to sit down.

"Can you explain to me how it happens that a black man and a white man—plasterers—can be found work-

ing side by side on the same scaffold here in Alabama? I find it so in other trades as well."

"Shure," said Hank Paterson, the store-keeper, "the Plasterers' Union draws no color line—that's why!"

"Then why, in the Socialist movement, have you two branches—white and black?"

"That's a cinch, too," Hank said, "when a nigger hits the Socialist idee he's hell on meetin's right away—ye caint glut 'im nohow. Onct a week satisfies us whites, but ev'ry time ye meet a nigger he's either goin' to work or goin' to a Socialist meetin'!"

Hank, in the intervals between attendance upon his customers, showed with some degree of pride, his circulating Socialist library. It occupied a corner of the store. He had his own system of keeping track of his lendings. The entire inside of a cupboard door was covered with the names of the borrowers and the catalogue, a large sheet of brown paper, covered the outside of the same door. Men kept coming and going—evidently the Delicatessen store was a Cave of Adullam, where the radicalism of Montgomery had focused itself.

"Hello! You ol' white trash niggah!" a black man said, as he bounced into the store—"What's d' news gwine t'be, huh?"

"Have you heard from Willyum?" asked Hank.

"Sho—an' ol' Oglethorpe's up agin it fo' sho dis time—he sho is."

"Do you mean William—the gardener?" asked Ruden.

"Yep—he's ma brother!"

"Is he still at Wetumpka?"

"He's right heah in town, boss."

"I would like to meet him—please give him this name and address and ask him to come and see me."

He scribbled his name and address on a slip of paper and handed it to the negro.

"Sam's a good fellow," Hank said when the negro left, "but he ain't nowheres near like his brother William. He's a corker—took the gold medal at Harvard—for a nig' that ain't so bad, is it?"

"No, it isn't so bad, but I know better things than that about him. I worked with him—or rather under him, at Oglethorpe's."

"Ye did, hey?"

"Yes."

"Did ye know 'Lijah,' up thar?"

"They used to call me 'Elijah.' "

"For heaven's sake!"

"Why are you surprised?"

"Ah'm not—Ah'm jest tickled clean off m' trolley. Jake," he said, to a man in the corner, "keep an eye on the store."

"Elijah," he said, "come up here."

Ruden followed him upstairs. There he led him into a small room—clean and tidy—a room that had been prepared with taste and care.

"Now, we've had that ready fur ye for weeks—git yer traps an' honor us b' hangin' out here as long as ye can—will ye?"

"It's very kind of you, Comrade, and I will gladly accept your invitation."

"Will ye come t'night?"

"No, not for a couple of days."

When Ruden arrived at his room he found a note on his table. It was scribbled in a child's handwriting:

"Occupant of room 7 is invited to sup with occupant of room 9, to-night, at seven."

The landlady knocked gently at the door.

"Come in."

"Ye got yer invite?"

"Yes."

"Yer comin', ain't ye?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Ah'll git ev'ry thing ready—put it on th' table and leave ye's."

"Will you kindly let me know when it strikes seven, please?"

"Sho—Ah'll tell ye in good time."

Meantime he trimmed his Van Dyke beard, brushed his clothes and added whatever improvements he could to his physical appearance.

"I'll bet the old hag is a spy," he muttered as he awaited his summons. "That drawl of hers—"

There was a gentle knock. The hour had come. He followed the landlady into her miniature dining-room—the table was in the middle of the room and what he saw beside it almost took away his breath. He stood with parted lips, watching what the first moment he thought must be a dream—an apparition or some uncanny procedure in the psychic world.

"Ethel!" he exclaimed, when he found his voice. Ethel Ainsworth, as daintily dressed as a sweet girl graduate, stood under the glow of the hanging lamp. Her face was suffused with joy—her eyes were filled with the laughter of the heart.

"Comrade," she said, as she advanced to meet him.

He took her hand in both of his, and as they looked into each other's eyes and read there the secret of the ages, there ensued a struggle that for the moment was freighted with more poignant agony than at least one there had ever known. Will power was tested to the breaking point. These two souls stood on the edge of a

volcano. They held, as Moses did, the tables of the Law in their hands—each of them in imminent danger of dashing them to the ground. The struggle was short-lived—he raised her hand to his lips and gently kissed it, and as she withdrew it, two scalding tears fell on it. She stepped back and kissed his tears from her hand, saying with more composure than her companion could command: “It’s a great big world, Stephen, and we are its builders, are we not?”

“I understand,” he said, “and we must build in the light of day.”

Another gentle knock. “My other guest,” she said, as she arose to greet him.

“Philip!” gasped Ruden—“well, who next, Ethel?”

After greeting Miss Ainsworth, Philip Bauerman came over to Ruden. The men kissed each other and were speechless.

As the three sat around the table, they were reminiscent—the old days at New Oxford crowded in upon them. Philip was wasted to a shadow of himself. He looked as if he was just recovering from a long illness. They ate little, but talked much. Ethel told her story first. She had secured an appointment in the Department of Justice at Washington, and had been assigned to the South to investigate peonage. At Wetumpka she had got enough evidence to indict a state, but she was oblivious of the presence of her friend. Her first knowledge of his whereabouts was when she heard his voice in the Delicatessen store.

Ruden’s story came second. The other two were in tears most of the time it took to tell it.

Miss Ainsworth helped him to avoid the recital of the most painful experience at Wetumpka.

“Yes,” she said, “I know all about Madeline’s visit

and how it ended, but Philip is not interested in that and we will not discuss it."

"It's your turn, Philip," Ruden said, as he put his arm around the boy's shoulder.

"Better cut mine out," was the slow, deliberate answer. "You do not know me, Mr. Ruden,—I am not the man you knew a year ago."

"What has happened, Philip?"

"Have you heard anything about my sister since you left New Oxford?"

"I haven't heard a word about anyone since I left," Ruden answered.

"Well, young Oglethorpe ruined Celia—my sister. He met her in a candy store where she was cashier—when her baby came—she asked him to give the child his name—she promised to aid him to get a divorce later, but he refused. She became desperate and determined to end her life.

"At a final interview he said he would die with her. He took her to Brantwood Point House, and the moment she swallowed her potion the beast got out, and that very night attended a ball and danced until the early hours of the morning. Celia was saved. We sent a lawyer after him and he had left the University. He does not know that Celia is my sister. I wrote him a pathetic letter asking him for a job as tutor, promising him his diploma at the Easter examination. He knew I gave up my course through illness. He took the bait and I am on my way to Wetumpka. I am hate turned to flesh. I am revenge incarnated. If the beast has a soul I shall pierce it with a red hot shaft. If he hasn't I shall make his carcass cry for mercy. My meat and my drink will be to watch him—study him, know him. I shall search for his soul first. If I don't find it, I shall

inflict upon him the punishment of Abelard! If he has a soul, I shall humiliate him with the humiliation of Arthur Dimsdale!"

Perspiration rolled off the student's face as he spoke. It was evident he was weak and in no physical condition to enter such a course.

Philip's friends went over the situation with him. They pointed out the futility of such a course—and tried to dissuade him, but it was entirely useless, he was obdurate.

"When a man or woman who has had a sister ruined comes to me, I will listen—not until then," he said. It was a pitiful sight to see that fine scholarly face so pinched with hate. Ruden said something about the fate that overtakes such men as Oglethorpe. "Yes," that's true," Philip said, "I thoroughly agree with you, but I consider myself the fate of God—the agent of God to overtake him."

They changed the subject. Miss Ainsworth told how she had secured an indictment of the planter for violation of the anti-peonage laws. "His friends," she said, "have persuaded him to ask for a speedy trial and within a few days the jury will be empaneled and the trial begun."

"And when the trial is over," Ruden said, "our trial will begin."

Ethel was silent for a minute. "And a crowd of witnesses shall bear testimony," she said calmly, "and we ourselves shall deliver judgment."

Philip Bauerman occupied Ruden's room that night, and Ruden betook himself to the "Cave," as they afterwards called the Delicatessen store.

Three days later a jury was empaneled in the Federal Court of the Southern District of Alabama to try

Llwellyn Oglethorpe and Joshua Huggins for violating the Federal laws against peonage. United States District Attorney Ferdinand Kubberly represented the Government. He was assisted by Attorney Ethel Ainsworth and George Russell of the Department of Justice.

CHAPTER XXV

THE REVENGE OF "LONE STAR"

THE court was crowded to its utmost capacity. The interest was national. Newspaper men from all parts of the country were present. The word "peonage" was new—quite new. It came over the border from Mexico—found its way into the Federal statutes in the sixties and remained hidden until Ferdinand Kubberly discovered and added it to the vocabulary of a phase of feudalism we imagined had passed away.

The spectators were men—mostly business men, not a single juror was challenged by the defense and very few by the Government. There was an air of supreme confidence in the camp of the Oglethorpe array of talent. It was the work of a few minutes to empanel a jury. It was addressed by the lawyers and the Judge and the twelve men "good and true" sat back in the seats as complacently as if they were a dining section of a presidential tour.

The presence of a woman in the Federal Court practicing as a member of the staff of the United States Attorney General caused, at first, laughter, then surprise, and later ridicule of a low order. Miss Ainsworth outlined the case for the Government. Mr. Blount, a brilliant criminal lawyer of Baltimore, spoke for the defense. All these preliminaries were brevity itself.

The first witness called was William Langford, "Big Bill," the ten-year contract man. The contract was marked as "Exhibit A." A legal battle waged for hours over its admission.

"This contract, your Honor," said the leading lawyer for the defense, "could only be made with a man who possessed less intelligence than a horse—it is an altogether unique and exceptional document. The party of the second part has put his cross at the bottom, but the witness on the stand is utterly unable to identify it. Furthermore, its admission will be an injustice to the entire South."

At this point the Government called Ethel Ainsworth to the stand.

"Have you ever seen this contract before, Miss Ainsworth?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the possession of the previous witness—I have a photograph of it."

"Have you it here?"

An 8 x 10 photograph of the contract was put in evidence.

LABOR CONTRACT.

"This contract and agreement for labor on the farm made and entered into this day between Llwelllyn Oglethorpe, landlord, party of the first part, and William Langford, laborer, party of the second part—witnesseth:

"That I, William Langford, laborer, of the second part, do hereby bind myself over and hire myself to Llwelllyn Oglethorpe to do and perform general farm work under the supervision of said Llwelllyn Oglethorpe or his agents, for the period of ten years, commencing Jan. 1, 1906, and ending Dec. 31st, 1916, and as pay for the said services I am to receive the sum of ten dollars per month, together with my board and lodging, which wages, less—or any advances made to me from time to time, and lost time at \$1 per day, is to be paid to me at the expiration of the above time. I agree at all times to be subject to the orders or commands of said Llwelllyn Oglethorpe, perform all work required of me by Llwelllyn Oglethorpe, or his agents

shall have the right to use such force as he or his agents may deem necessary to require me to remain on his farm and perform good and satisfactory services. He shall have the right to lock me up for safe keeping, work me under the rules and regulations of his farm, and if I should leave his farm or run away he shall have the right to offer and pay a reward not exceeding \$25 for my capture and return, together with the expense of the same, which amount, so advanced, together with my other indebtedness I may owe him at the expiration of above time; I agree to work under all rules and regulations of this contract at the same wages as above Jan. 1, 1906—and ending Dec. 31, 1916. The said Llwellyn Oglethorpe shall have the right to transfer his interest in this contract to any other party, and I agree to continue work for said assignee same as for the original party of the first part.

"I, Llwellyn Oglethorpe, party of the first part, hereby agree and hire the said William Langford for the above time and pay wages as above set forth, and otherwise fill my part of the above agreement.

"Witness our hands and seals this first day of January, 1906.

"..... Seal.

"..... Seal.

"Witness

....."

"While we are in the art gallery, we might as well exhibit the remainder of our pictures," said the District Attorney. "The previous witness has testified to whippings of various sorts—you witnessed some of these occurrences, did you not?"

Here a dozen photographs were exhibited, showing the various methods of flogging at the Oglethorpe stockade. They were handed to the jury. "Big Bill" was shown strapped to a log, with Huggins wielding the shingle on his bare feet. "Big Bill's" wife was shown strung up by her thumbs to a ring in the wall. It was a ghastly picture and created a sensation of disgust and pity.

The cross-examination was fierce and unsparing. The

defense spent five hours in bringing out the life of the witness.

"In your work of deception and hypocrisy, Miss Ainsworth," said Blount, "whom did you have in mind as a model—history records some brilliant examples—such as Judas Iscariot—Benedict Arnold and a lot of such 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' characters?"

"My model," said Miss Ainsworth, in a clear voice, "was Nathan Hale, Mr. Blount—you may have heard of him."

"I am not on the witness stand!" he retorted sharply. Before proceeding further he consulted his partners—there was a moment of intense silence as the tall, lean, clean-shaven man advanced a few steps toward the witness. His lips were compressed—he looked steadily at her with blazing eyes.

"You have testified here," he said slowly, "as to the immoral use of black female servants and convicts—do you testify from hearsay or from knowledge of the facts?"

"From knowledge of the facts."

"You actually know, then, by first hand knowledge, of such occurrences?"

"Not being the victim myself, Mr. Blount, it would necessarily have to be second hand."

"Then it's hearsay?"

"If —"

"No 'ifs' or 'buts,' please; answer my question Yes or No."

"If —" she continued, but he stopped her.

"Your Honor," said Mr. Blount, "I demand that the witness answer my question."

"I shall permit the witness to answer your question in her own language," said the Judge.

"If," continued Miss Ainsworth, "a confession by the men who committed the crimes is hearsay, then I answer your question in the affirmative."

"Were these alleged confessions written?"

"No, they were oral."

"Then we have only your word for it?"

"I anticipated the difficulty of your question, so made provision for it." At a signal from the witness, a square box was laid on a table in front of the jury. Miss Ainsworth left the witness stand and personally supervised the opening of it.

"In the early part of my investigation," she said, as she displayed a phonograph, "I took this into the forest. I made myself so familiar with the people I wanted, that I made them, unknown to themselves, talk for publication."

"While Miss Ainsworth adjusts her machine we will call Joshua Huggins to the stand," said the District Attorney.

Huggins had a squeaky voice and the Government's object in calling him at this juncture was to put it on exhibition—to make an "exhibit" of it. He was led into a chatty reminiscence for this purpose. Then he was taken from the stand and Miss Ainsworth resumed. An expert was on hand to explain to the jury the mechanism of the machine. They were asked to compare the voice of Huggins, as they heard it on the witness stand, with the voice in the machine. Then the Huggins cylinder was adjusted and the squeaky voice of the foreman was reproduced in a conversation that would not be permitted to go through the mails.

The jury was amazed—they laughed outright at the trick. Huggins glared at the machine, as if it were a negro, disputing the prerogative of his whip! His jaw

hung loose and his little rat eyes were bulging out of their sockets.

The labor contract in dispute was not admitted until William Harding, the head gardener, identified it as a document he had explained to "Big Bill." Joe Belden, the other ten-year contract man, had a similar contract, but the Government deemed the admission of one enough.

The trial dragged on for a week—each side took a day to sum up. Among the most interested attendants at the trial was "Lone Star." He listened to every witness—he watched every move. He looked nervous and worried. Ruden took him for a walk at recess one day, but scarcely a word could be gotten out of him.

Miss Ainsworth summed up for the Government:

"Peonage, gentlemen, is the compulsory holding to labor of one man by another, for the sake of having him work out a debt. The labor contract signed and sealed by Llewellyn Oglethorpe as party of the first part is not an evidence of peonage, but of slavery. A man cannot sell himself in the United States either as a peon or as a slave. You have the evidence before you of how these men were chased with bloodhounds, beaten when caught and brought back. The debt charged was a fiction, but they were put in irons to work it out. Their wives were hunted down and returned. They were strung up by the thumbs—they were stripped and flogged. They were used for immoral purposes. In this case the peons are black men, but all over the South tens of thousands of white men are held in peonage, flogged and robbed by the pagan industrial usages of a backward medieval section of the United States.

"It is mooted that it is impossible to get a Southern jury to convict the rich violators of the Federal Statute on Peonage, but I hope you gentlemen will remember

that eighty million people are watching you to-day and that all we ask of you is to bring in a verdict in accordance with the evidence."

Judge Swayne reviewed the evidence and charged the jury. He divested the case of all sentiment and reduced it to a question of law and evidence. No one who heard the charge doubted for a moment what the Judge intended to convey. It was virtually an order to bring in a verdict of guilty. The hope of the accused lay in the jury and there were those who believed that that hope had been doctored. The accused laughed and chatted with his counsel.

The jury were out fifteen minutes. Then they filed back, were counted, and amid a breathless silence, the foreman arose and said, "We, the jury, find the prisoner not guilty."

The last syllable had scarcely died away when a harsh voice broke the spell of silent awe. It was a shout that struck terror to the hearts of men. "God!" screamed "Lone Star," who stood three yards from Oglethorpe, "Ye've missed yer chance an' the law is found want-in.'" There was a flash of fire, a loud report, and Llwellyn Oglethorpe dropped dead at his lawyer's feet!

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLINKING BEAST

TEN days after the tragic ending of the trial Stephen Ruden knocked at the door of a little white cottage on the outskirts of Arden—a mill village in the great steel center of Southern Alabama.

A young mulatto woman opened the door.

“I was told to ask for ‘Nell,’ ” he said. She smiled and invited him inside. “I am ‘Nell,’ ” she said, when he had seated himself.

He judged her to be about thirty years of age. She was almost white, with straight black hair—a face that he thought the most beautiful he had ever seen, and a form as perfect as the Venus de Milo.

The cottage was scrupulously clean and neat. Old-fashioned hand-made rag carpets covered the floor—a log fire blazed on the wide open hearth. One side of the larger of the two rooms was covered from floor to ceiling with books. Photographs of the old masters adorned the walls and over the mantelpiece hung a landscape by a modern artist.

The room had a literary atmosphere, and he discovered later that it had a literary occupant. Nell Palmer had earned her living by writing from the year she graduated from Fisk University.

“I brought you a message from Jim, Miss Palmer,” Ruden said, by way of introduction.

“Where did you see him, and how is he?” she asked anxiously.

"I'm sorry to tell you that he is dead."

A look of pain overspread her beautiful features.

"You knew him, then?"

"Yes, and he told me a little of his romance—not much."

She sighed, and muttered "Poor Jim."

Ruden told her of "Kentuck's" last message, and as he went over the details, she wept quietly—merely saying occasionally, "Poor Jim, Poor Jim!"

"Jim and I were brought up together—we were inseparable when children and as boy and girl. My dear old mother washed for a living and out of her hard-earned wages saved enough to put me through college. Jim had to work in that mill over the way when he was eight years of age.

"The only thing he ever learned was the violin. We saw much of each other and braved the scorn of two races for it. Then the great question came, and I had to decide for both. One cannot fight against the stars. He was not angry—he came here one night, and over there, by the window, he played his last tune for me. His violin seemed human that night,—it sang—then it prayed—then it wept. Jim usually put it back in the case, but that night he took it away under his arm, and I never saw them again."

Ruden went over again—this time a little more tenderly—the broken tale that "Kentuck" told him on his death-bed.

She hung eagerly on every word. They talked for several hours. Ruden was charmed by this unusual personality, and was loath to leave. He had intended to take a train in the late afternoon, but he changed his mind.

"Do you know where I can get a lodging in the vil-

lage, Miss Palmer? I want to get an accurate idea of a cotton mill before I go back North again."

"I'm afraid you will have to go to town—there isn't even a lodging house here."

"You have an exaggerated idea of my needs," he said. "A cot in a corner—anywhere—in a laborer's cottage will do me."

"I have one white friend—intimate friend—in the village—but he lives alone, does his own work. He is the finest character we have here. He has a cot which he keeps for tramps and nondescript wayfarers." She was smiling as she spoke, and her smile was like sunshine after rain, "He would be glad to have you, I am sure."

"Would it be too much to ask you to take me to him?"

"Not too much for me—but for the village—it would take a long time to get over it. I will make you a diagram and it will guide you there."

She took a small pad of paper and made a diagram of the village.

"That's easy," he said, as he followed her pencil.

"And the name of the old man?"

"Is Zapolya—the villagers call him 'Zap'."

"What shall I call him?"

"A long time ago I named him 'Baron'—there is noble blood in him if one could get back far enough to find it."

They went over the diagram again. "It's simple," she said. "Follow 'Shotgun Row' to the end—then turn to your right and the first cottage you come to is the 'Baron's.'"

"May I call again before I leave?"

"I will be delighted to have you—any time. By-the-way," she said meditatively, "can you take tea or—

can you meet a friend of mine to-morrow afternoon?"

"I will take tea with you and your friend if I may," he replied.

"Very well, I shall expect you at four."

With the diagram in his hand and his bundle under his arm, he walked slowly away, muttering to himself—"Poor 'Kentuck'—I knew there was something big in your soul."

He did not go directly to his prospective lodging. He wandered about the queer deserted village,—for the inhabitants were still in the mill.

The mill village is laid out like a chequer-board on a surface of slag, cinders and ashes. There are divisions, but no streets; there are ditches, but no drains. There are some young trees struggling for their lives, but grass grows poorly on clinkers.

The huts are square—of the same size and pattern, and Ruden, as he walked past them, could not tell the back from the front. Every back door had four dumps,—wood, ashes, coal and closet.

Every back door was just five yards from somebody else's front door.

He got tired stepping over the deep ditches.

An old man answered Ruden's knock. He was tall and somewhat bent. A mass of snow white hair was brushed over on one side of his fine, massive head. A silken white beard almost reached his waist.

"Miss Palmer sent me," was Ruden's simple introduction.

"Nell?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

"Come in."

The hut was a single room—neat—for a man's place. A place for everything and everything in its place. On

a bare pine table sat the lamp—already lit—near a little stove was what was evidently the bed of the old man—near the back window was what Ruden understood at a glance to be the cot for wayfarers like himself.

“The Baron,” as Nell called him, looked like a patriarch—the face reminded his visitor of Michael Angelo’s Moses.

“You are a stranger in these parts, I suppose,” he said, as they seated themselves.

“Yes—and you?”

“I’ve been around these parts for nearly forty years.”

There was a slight foreign accent and an awkward handling of English that denoted at once a foreign origin.

They sat, one at each end of the table, looking into each other’s faces, asking questions, as though there was a limited time in which to ask them.

The old man was the more aggressive. In half an hour he had traveled with Ruden over the rough experiences of the past year.

Little of his own past was touched upon, however. When Ruden showed his eagerness to travel with him along the same pathways, he sidetracked the subject by starting to cook supper. After supper, he gave his guest a *resumé* of the village—its life and labor. So accurate, so vivid and photographic was the description that Ruden longed for the time when he could see and hear for himself.

“I turn in rather early, stranger,” the old man said, “but if you want to sit up and read, make yourself at home.”

He took a book from a shelf—adjusted his spectacles and read for five minutes—he closed it and was silent

for awhile. Ruden thought it was a Bible and inquired.

"Yes," the old man said, "it's a way I have of keeping fresh in my mind my native language."

Ruden reached over and took the book.

"It's Hungarian," he said.

"How do you know?" asked the host, as he looked over his glasses at his guest.

"I guessed at it—but I myself am Hungarian."

The old man looked surprised.

"How long have you been in the country?" he inquired.

"About as long as you have, I guess."

"H'm," the old man grunted, "you've made better use of your time."

Long after his host had gone to sleep Ruden sat at the table handling the quaint old Bible. It had hand-wrought iron clasps—on the fly leaf there was a genealogy with records of births, deaths and marriages. There were clippings from Hungarian papers and marginal notes in Latin and Greek. On the table sat a framed daguerreotype of a young woman which he supposed might be the old man's wife.

"What an odd place for such a man to live," he muttered. As he sat in deep meditation, with the daguerreotype in his hand, a strange sensation overcame him. It seemed like a visit back—back millenniums—to the scenes of a former incarnation. His sight grew dim, a numbness was slowly creeping over his body. When he extinguished the light he saw a stream of moonlight shoot in a square shaft across the hut.

It lit up with a silvery glow the face that looked like an old Norse King. He could not sleep. His whole life passed in review. It passed in a series of tableaux.

He was aroused by the wild screams of a whistle. It was half-past three. He dressed and went out among the huts. As he passed "Shotgun Row" a light attracted him. He stood for a minute—there were no blinds—no curtains. A boy's head, that loomed like a feather duster, was being shaken. It was shaken by his father, perhaps. He watched. The head wobbled from side to side—a little girl of ten appeared—she held him upright—then shook him vigorously. A mother was at the stove. Five minutes later they sat down to breakfast. All unwashed—uncombed.

Ruden crept softly to the door. There wasn't a sound. Two boys appeared at the door. It was dark. They jumped over the deep ditch and went down hand in hand toward the main road. The big gray mill looked like a blinking beast watching for its prey. Tiny threads of light shot from a hundred blazing eyes and out of the tall neck there vomited volumes of hot black breath that blotted out the stars.

Over the ash piles—ditches and gutterways—winding in and out among and across lots, moved the ragged unwashed stream of human child life toward the gray Bastile of Arden. He watched the little feather duster heads dart past the windows. Then he heard a dull muffled roar of machinery and he knew that the battle of endurance was on!

He returned to the hut and crept into bed again. At seven o'clock the old man got up and made some coffee.

He knew Ruden was awake and offered him some.

"You've been out around the mill already, have you not?"

"Yes, how could anyone sleep when that whistle blows?"

"That whistle is reformed—it is mild—two years ago

we had a 'wild cat' whistle, but that was abolished, for the people of Anniston, five miles away, held a mass meeting and had it replaced by the one you heard this morning."

Ruden laughed—"I suppose the owners never heard either?" he ventured to say.

"No," the old man said, as he reached for his book, "the whip on the backs of these children is held in the hand of a Congregational Deacon who lives on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston."

"I thought the Governor of the State owned it."

"He owns some of the stock—perhaps a fourth—another fourth was held by Oglethorpe, the man who was shot recently."

"Oglethorpe?" ejaculated Ruden.

"Why are you surprised?"

"I was thinking of his widow."

There was a knock at the door. It was a black boy with a note for the "Baron."

"Nell wants me to go with you to meet her friend," the old man said.

"You'll go, won't you?"

He did not answer, and the question was not repeated. Ruden had watched his host carefully as he performed his morning toilet. He wanted to be as little trouble as possible. Daylight came. The lamp was extinguished and the blinds rolled up. As Ruden began his toilet the old man bestirred himself.

"Don't move," Ruden said—"I know where everything is. I watched you carefully."

He opened the door to dispose of the dirty water—as he did so, he saw something on the floor. "What's this, Baron?" he asked. The old man was there instantly.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as he picked it up. "That's a little bit of the superstition of the past—but I cling to some of those old things." It was a bat—dried and flattened, it had been nailed to the inside of the front door for years.

The ugly thing was minutely examined at the window, but no apparent cause could be found for its failure any longer to keep out the evil spirits.

"I had a strange dream last night," the host said.

"I did, too," Ruden said, "but I was awake when I was dreaming—"

The old man continued, as if he hadn't heard: "I had dismissed it from my mind, until my bat dropped—now I think it bodes of evil." There was a long silence—Ruden made several attempts to draw his host out of it, but failed.

"You will come back to-night?" were the only words he heard for hours. He took the trolley to Anniston, bought a camera and returned. By the time he returned to take the old man to Nell's, he had photographed the village and the mill children. The place fascinated him. There were churches—he wondered what the preachers did. There was a library—he wondered who read the books.

A library in Arden seemed to him like a shoe store for the distribution of free shoes to footless people.

At half-past three he returned for the "Baron," and together they went to Nell's.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Ruden, as Nell's door opened—for it was Nell's friend who opened it, and Nell's friend was none other than William, the gardener! The men gripped each other's hands. Nell and the "Baron" looked on with intense interest.

"Sit down, gentlemen," pleaded the gentle voice of

the hostess,—“sit down; you can settle the affairs of the universe as well sitting as standing.” The four of them gathered around the open log fire and Nell brought a small table, laden with cups and saucers. “Go on,” she said, “don’t mind me—I’ll supply the inner circle while you talk around the rim.”

The conversation was so engrossing that the refreshments were utterly forgotten.

“You are not drinking your tea, gentlemen,” broke in the hostess, “and my good corn pone is going begging!”

They were all silent, but they drank their tea and ate Nell’s corn pone, watching the blazing logs on the open fireplace.

Before they were aware of it, the daylight had gone. Nell lit the lamp and urged them to remain for supper.

There was a conspiracy to get the old man to talk. He was a mystery to those who knew him best. He smoked a long clay pipe, and every few minutes, he would knock the ashes out on the hearthstone and refill it. It was evident that he was reminiscent, and they hesitated to disturb him.

“Baron,” said Nell, “you have promised many a time to tell me of your early experiences here. William’s friend is one of us—he has gone through much for our cause—the cause of the people—you will not mind him—he may tell us more of his life when we hear you.”

“I don’t object,” he said, as he again knocked the ashes out of his pipe. “Something attracts me to this young man—if he doesn’t mind me saying so.”

“It’s mutual, I can assure you,” Ruden said.

They drew their chairs closer to the lamps. Here were four unusual personalities—each with a life’s mis-

sion unfulfilled—each eager for fellowship—eager to be understood.

“I understand you are a writer, sir,” he said to Ruden.

“I have just broken in.”

“Then the story of our pilgrimage may come in handy sometime when you have a novel in mind.”

“I have a life to live—that’s a greater thing than to write a novel.”

CHAPTER XXVII

“THE SNOW CHILD”

“A PARTY of us—neighbors in Zeiden,” he began, “got together and talked of emigration.

“There was a Professor of history—a village school-master—several skilled mechanics and a dozen laborers. There were fourteen women. We had heard great stories of the New World. It was verily a land flowing with milk and honey—so we saved our money for the journey and sailed, toward the close of the year 1866.

“It was a long, tiresome journey. We landed at Boston, and prepared for the journey South. Florida was our destination. The first town we arrived at outside of Boston, we were ordered not to make any stop. None of us could speak English. The Professor spoke Greek, Latin, French and German, but not a word of English. We were laboring under great difficulties in this respect. We had underestimated the cost of the trip, too, and found ourselves in great need of many things we could not provide for the women and children. We were soon made aware of the fact that word was being sent from one town to another, warning the inhabitants of our approach, and telling them we were persistent beggars and dangerous characters. Consequently we found no consideration—no mercy. We imagined that would only be true of Massachusetts. We had a map and were glad when we got out of that State. We were mistaken again. We were pushed out of the first Connecticut town with a shotgun at our elbows. It began to snow.

The notion had gotten into our heads that there was no snow here. We were poorly clad for such cold weather.

“My wife and I had been married about a year. We hoped to be in our dreamland of Florida before our first child was born. We were doomed to disappointment. When we arrived at a village called Danielson, in Connecticut, my wife knew that her child would be born in a few hours. Of course I begged hard with gestures and exclamations for a shed or barn for the event, but the word had reached Danielson, and we were pushed out. The first select-man—with a gun under his arm and a ferocious dog—accompanied us to the outskirts. My wife was in great pain. I explained the exigency—I held her in front of him—he merely pushed his tobacco from one jaw to the other. There wasn’t a gun in the crowd. I’d surely have shot him if there had been. Out we went—a dull, heavy-laden group of the most poverty stricken pilgrims the world ever saw.

“It was snowing. Two feet of snow lay on the ground. We climbed over an American (barbed wire) fence and prepared for the event. We made a bed on the snow. We men formed ourselves into a sort of wall to keep the wind off. It ceased snowing and became bitterly cold. There wasn’t a woman who even knew the elements of nursing. The schoolmaster acted as doctor and nurse too. How cold and pitiless the stars looked that night! Then there was a cry—God! how my heart jumped to my mouth! It was the cry of our first born. Some of the women were almost paralyzed with fear. I was swearing—Ursula, my wife, heard me swear, and in her agony, she said, ‘Emrich, we will trust God—do you hear, dear? We will trust God.’ Inwardly I cursed God—I cursed the disciples of a stable-born God, who would have given shelter to a cow, but treated Ur-

sula like a beast of the forest. I became so bitter, so hateful—but what could I do against a whole civilization? In our town, we would have vied with each other in our effort to help. A nameless dread took possession of us all—all save Ursula! We stole hay and broke up a fence, made a fire, and kept her warm. We carried Ursula by turns to the next big city, where people were a little more human. Our group called the babe “the snow child”; but Ursula had him christened after the patron saint of our nation, St. Stephen!

“At New Oxford our party divided—Ursula and I came to Georgia and later to Alabama. While in Atlanta we had two other children, a boy and a girl. Ursula died, and I did the best I could to earn a living and look after the children. A planter took advantage of me in a labor contract and when I rebelled, I was put in jail and my children given away. I never got a trace of any of them after that.

“I studied the English language. I searched the institutions of the South. I traveled ten States. I visited everybody I could learn of, who had adopted children. I have advertised in the Hungarian papers in this country since they were first published. When all these failed I have gone to clairvoyants and mediums. When they failed I plead with God. There, at last, I got hope.”

“Were there any marks by which you could identify the children?” Ruden asked.

“Yes—I have mentioned that in the advertisements.

“On the voyage—one of our shoemakers lost a little ball of wax and somehow it had been left on our trunk, and Ursula one day found that the wax had stuck to one of her undergarments and it eventually got fastened on her thigh, and, strange to say, when the

child was born we found a birthmark the exact color of the wax on his thigh. It was, the professor remarked, very curiously an exact, and unmistakable, outline of the map of Italy!"

Ruden arose from his seat and paced back and forth across the room for a minute. He drew his chair up close to the old man and looked intently into his face. Then he planted his right leg over his left, and drawing a line with his finger on the upper part of his thigh, said:

"Right there, is a birthmark, the color of cobblers' wax and the exact shape of the map of Italy, and my name is Stephen!"

"God!" exclaimed the old man, as he looked up toward the roof—"don't fool me at this age!"

He arose and took Ruden—led him by the hand as he would a child—into the other room. They were gone but a minute—the young people awaited their return in breathless silence.

"Yes—yes," the old man said, as he returned, weeping, coughing, hesitating,—“this is the snow child—Oh, God! let down your big hand till I clasp it—Ursula—dear, he's here at last—can you see him?" He was utterly oblivious of anybody else—and talked to God and Ursula as if they were sitting by the log fire of the mulatto lady.

Ruden was speechless—he just stood looking—or trying to look—for his eyes were filled with tears. When he could command his voice, he said—"Now, where did I get the name of Ruden from?"

"'Ruden,' is that your name? Why! Bless your soul—that's your mother's name—her father's name was Stephen Ruden—he was a pastor in our village and to suit these quick brainless labor bosses we called our-

selves Ruden. I changed it again when my quest proved fruitless. Isn't it odd that I never asked you what your name was?"

"No, it's not a bit strange," broke in Nell. "You never did ask the names of your guests—you always said they came to you because they didn't want their names known!"

Father and son heard little more that night. They looked at each other long and searchingly. The father was almost childish in his exultation. He laughed immoderately and at trifles. He would begin the recital of an incident and lose the thread—"well, I've forgotten" he would say, "but you're here now anyway—that settles everything!"

It became pathetic and Ruden suggested an adjournment. The three men left the cottage together. When they got to the trolley line they discovered that the last car for the city had gone.

A hack came along and Ruden stopped it. "Are you going to the city?" he asked the driver.

"Yes'r."

"There you are, William," Ruden said as he fumbled for the fare.

"Hold on thar," the driver said.

"Sorry, Colonel, but ah don't drive no niggers, that's one thing sure."

"All right, driver, thank you just the same," William replied.

The hack moved, but an idea came to the black man and he said, "Pardon me, driver, would it be all the same to you if I drove you to Anniston? You get into the hack as passenger, and I will drive you to the city, and pay you for the privilege!"

"A durned good idea!" said the astonished hackman,

as he climbed in behind William, with the fare in his hand.

William mounted the box, took the reins in his hand, and drove off, saying "Good night, Mr. Ruden, good night!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

NIHILISM OR SOCIALISM—WHICH?

LONG after his father had gone to sleep in that strange out of the way village, Stephen Ruden sat with the daguerreotype of his mother in his hand. As he looked into her face he was moved to the depth of his soul by the tragedy of the poor. He saw it in her face—that face that had been lighted by the vision of a new land, a new home, a new opportunity. Then the fact became the mockery of the dream—the contact with the disciples of the Nazarene had broken her faith—severely jarred it, anyway, and capitalism had broken her home and maybe her heart.

“Mother, dear,” he murmured softly, “your ‘snow child’ renews his allegiance to God and the people to-night”—he looked intently at the picture. “I have not yet suffered unto blood, but if the cause demands that sacrifice, I shall not falter, your sweet face will give me courage in that hour of trial.” He kissed the portrait, laid it gently on the table and went to sleep.

Father and son spent ten days in close communion. Minutely Stephen went over the milestones of the past, as far back as his memory carried him. His earliest recollection was of a colored woman who never permitted him out of her sight by night or day. He remembered a day when she took him to a big institution in New York, where he lived until he was twelve. It was the Watts Orphan Asylum, but how he came to be put there,

he never knew. He wept for days for the colored woman, whom he considered his mother until the boys laughed the idea out of his head. From the orphanage he went to a farm in Ohio, where he was brutally treated and often cruelly beaten by the farmer. At the end of the first year he ran away, and began, at the age of thirteen, the real struggle of life.

"You were the only one of the three I could get any trace of," the old man said, in explaining the guardianship of the colored woman. "The Orphan Asylum has a rule; it has not broken it in half a century. It gives no information concerning the children under its care. They have been haled to court a hundred times, but they have never divulged the past or the parentage of the social driftwood within their walls. You might have been playing within a yard of me when I was pleading with them for information!"

Almost daily there was a conference around the little tea table in Nell's cottage. It was in the old man's cabin, however, that Ruden learned to know his father. It was something of a shock to the younger man to learn that his father was an aristocrat in rags. Suffering at the wheel of labor, feeling the sting all his life, of the lash of the task masters and yet utterly distrustful of democracy and hopeless concerning the future of the people. He was an extreme type of individualist, and believed that in process of time the world would come to an industrial patriarchy in which the industrial masters would rule their workmen as did Abraham. When pressed by his son for an outline of the process by which he thought this would come to pass, he said:

"Each man must do his part. It means revolution—not a revolution such as you have been talking to me about—I wish I could think with you on that, but I

cannot. History—the long history of the past has no instance of a revolution without blood.”

“What about Christianity?” Stephen asked.

“The same,” he answered—“it was effected by blood—the founder shed his blood, and his early followers were tortured, burned, thrown to the lions and left to fester and rot in dungeon cells.”

“But, father,” the younger said persuasively, “the very illustrations you give can be used against the theory you hold—the founder and his followers made no resistance. They suffered physical torture for the spiritual ideal.”

“Passive or active resistance is a matter of detail,” he replied, “it’s an accident—the effect is the same—the price paid is blood!”

They were sitting one at each end of the little table. A pot was boiling on the little stove, and as an occasional overflow fizzed and sputtered on the hot metal the old man looked over toward it, but made no move—nor did his son.

The noon whistle blew and a moment later the little children rushed hither and thither around the hut. Both men silently watched the little slaves of King Cotton as they passed the door.

Suddenly the hut was darkened and in the doorway through which most of the light came, stood Nell, and behind her, William.

“Ah, you’ve been talking politics again,” Nell said, as she laid her hand on the old man’s shoulder.

“Not politics exactly—Stephen is a revolutionist, but his revolution seems to consist of squirting Eau De Cologne or shooting peas through a blower!”

“Even that,” said Ruden, “can be proven to be as effective as dynamite, in the cause of the people!”

"That's cool comfort from a Socialist," Zap said. "It's cooler than nitroglycerine—I admit!"

William attempted to change the current of thought but was not very successful.

"I have just discovered that my father is a Nihilist, William—" Ruden said, "so you can easily imagine how engrossed we were in our conference, when you arrived."

"A Nihilist?" exclaimed Nell.

"Yes, with a real Russian flavor!"

There was a ripple of laughter from the young people. The old man was silent for a minute. If there was any humor in the remarks, it did not reach him. There was a cloud on his face—a sort of storm signal of the heart, which the young people were quick to notice.

Nell drove the three men into a corner, while she laid the table for dinner.

"What hope have you for your people, William?" the old man asked.

"Well, between your picture of convulsion and Stephen's forest of Arden, I take a middle ground. The colored race has a future, but they have also a present, and I am more concerned with facts than fancies."

When pressed for a more definite explanation, he explained his position. While he was doing so, it was evident that the old man was groping for light in his own problem—a problem he had not yet even mentioned to his son. He had made up his mind when only one person was involved—now there were two.

"Go on, William," he said eagerly—"I know pretty well where you stand, but I want Stephen to hear it!"

To the gardener, there were two capitals in the black Kingdom of the South. He explained them. One was

at Tuskegee, the other at Atlanta. In each capital a prophet and to each prophet a following. One leader pointed the way to salvation through labor—the black man was to appeal to the white man through a well tilled field or a well built house. The other was more revolutionary—he spoke of rights and urged the black man to stand on his feet as a man, and a citizen. William began at Tuskegee and wound up at the capital of Georgia. He was an advocate of armed resistance, and as he was advancing rapidly to leadership himself, he was anxious to air his views—to try them out. He spoke as a man speaks who is not quite sure of his ground. The old man reserved his fire in the hope that it would ignite easier after William's broadside.

"Look here, William," Ruden broke in, "you don't mean to tell us that to arm the negroes is going to solve that problem, do you?"

"Yes, I do, in a degree."

"What degree?"

"To the degree that they will never again be caught like rats in a trap as they were in Atlanta recently, when not a black man in the city could buy a gun, and they were shot like dogs, in the streets!"

"William, you are talking of things cataclysmal—we were speaking of growth, and no healthy growth—" Ruden began.

"Yes—I beg pardon—yes, there are cataclysms that are healthy growths," the old man said, as he arose to his feet.

Nell was ready and about to announce the meal, but a look at the old man's face startled her—the eyes were fire lit—the brows contracted and scowling. The white hair seemed alive—the look, as a whole, was less than human, and affected strangely not only the woman but

the two younger men. All the tenderness had gone out of his voice as well as out of his face. His benign features became distorted.

"Calvary was a cataclysm, so was '93—Stephen, a great ancestor of yours had a red hot crown placed on his head because he espoused the cause of the people! The martyrdom of Lincoln was cataclysmal—so was Gettysburg—for forty years I have pined and prayed—studied and wondered—I have been a caldron of hate and a paragon of patience—I have sat at the feet of Jesus, Mazzini, Tolstoi and Baecunin and I have made up my mind. My nerves are of steel. I shall shock the nation into a sense of justice—the very foundations of those temples of dishonor at Washington shall tremble." He was panting for breath—but no one dared interrupt him. His hand trembled, and he came forward and leaned on the table. "I have counted the cost—I have weighed the results in the scales of God. It is an age of cowardice—of the lust of gold and the pride of life. Stephen, you talk of Democracy as if it was composed of men—Demos is a drunken giant, shorn of his power—he is mud brained, blear eyed and maniacal—a beast in the maw of a bigger beast. Educate him? God couldn't—he wouldn't try. Demos moves when the earth trembles around him—when the lash stings him—when he is starved into madness! God's method of treatment is cataclysmal and I—" he lowered his voice and his eyes. "I—I—well, the rest is for you, Stephen, you alone!"

Nell tried to break the spell of solemnity, but failed. The frugal meal sat on the table untouched. Nell and William excused themselves and left. Father and son, when left alone, resumed the discussion—"You are anxious, of course, to know the nature of what I can divulge

to you only—it will shock you, for the schools have left their mark on you.”

“Go on,” said the son impatiently.

“Your patience is exhausted already!”

“No, not that, I am merely on edge to know your plan.”

The old man went to his trunk—took out a square box—placed it on the table and again looked inquiringly at his son.

“Before I open this, I ought to explain to you,” he said, “that for ten years I lived in the same hut with Validhoff, the man who wrecked the palace of the Grand Duke Sergius and gathered the Duke to his fathers in 1881.”

“And he made you a Nihilist!” Stephen said, laughing. The laugh was dry and forced, for a look of pain overspread the old man’s features.

“Yes—he did. I feared that the sight of my children might change my mind, but it has only intensified my purpose.”

“What have you there?”

He uncovered the box and revealed an intricate ganglia of metal tubes, fuses, giant caps and copper wire. Ruden turned ashy pale. All that he had ever learned seemed to pass in review. Every hate he had ever known shot through him again. He looked from the infernal machine to his father and then back to the machine.

“So that is your cure for the sufferings of the people—is it?”

“No, it’s my contribution! It’s an alarm bell,—a warning—a tocsin the sound of which rings the death knell of at least a few tyrants!”

Ruden’s first impulse was to argue but he changed his

mind and proceeded to draw the old man out—to get at the bottom of his plan. It was a less difficult undertaking than he imagined it would be. Forty years of suffering—of labor, of disappointment and hopelessness had created a womb of despair out of which was born this intricate instrument for the violent destruction of human life. It was a cut across lots to an act of revenge. He thought of it at first as expiation but in speaking of it he preferred to speak of it as revenge, lest he should be accused of fanaticism or mysticism.

Ruden joked a little over the plan. His father looked dazed. A look of pain covered his face and the son changed his tactics. They examined the machine together. Every detail was explained.

“And you have counted the cost?” the younger said.
“Yes.”

“And you think we have the same justification for a bomb that they have in Russia?”

“I am not particular as to points of comparison. I have suffered from an evil—my corrective will focus the gaze of the world on the tyranny over the poor.”

“Despite what you say, my father—I am sure you have been tremendously influenced by your Russian friend and since you will not submit your plan to discussion I will have to go over at least a few points of contrast. In Russia tyranny is hereditary. Here we elect our tyrants and consequently misery is of our own making.

“Representative government is what you say it is—‘a farce,’ but the remedy is not dynamite but intelligence. If my vote is offset by a stupid vote, a venal vote, I must wake up my ignorant comrade.”

“Yes, yes,” the old man said impatiently. “I know that line of argument. I have reasoned like that a

thousand times! But that line of argument has no weight—none whatever!”

“Then listen to this one—you are my father—I hoped that you might also be my comrade but your mental attitude pushes us apart. We are mentally as far apart as the poles. Now, if you persist in your plot I will abandon sonship for a larger—more important relationship.”

“There is no larger relationship!” the father interrupted.

“Yes, there is—I am a son of the people!”

“What would you do?”

“Save my father from himself!”

“How?”

“Break your infernal machine or be blown to atoms—”

They were rudely interrupted by the sudden entrance of a mill boy—panting—out of breath. Without a word he slid under the table. The men had scarcely time to look at each other when Robinett, “the whipper in,” appeared in the doorway.

“Hello, Zap!” he said, looking around the hut, “did that damned kid shoot through here?”

“Yes—” the old man answered, “he came in at one end and went out at the other!”

The “whipper in” trotted through the hut and disappeared.

The old man shut the doors and pulled the urchin from beneath the table.

“What’s the matter, Sammy?” he asked.

Sammy whined.

The old man took him on his knee, wiped his face and soothed him into calmness. Then he went to the cupboard and brought Sammy a slice of bread covered with

jam. The boy smiled and looked into the old man's face with gratitude and tenderness. Then he looked at Ruden. He saw there a look of doubt and uncertainty.

"What're you doin' here, Mister?" he asked.

"I'm a friend of Zap's."

"Ye look stung!"

The old man poured Sammy out a glass of milk. The boy's eyes sparkled again. "Gee!" he exclaimed—"ain't ol' Zap the goods though?"

Ruden looked at his father and thought perhaps a "father of the people" might be as important as a "son of the people." Sammy, now full, free and somewhat frolicsome for a cracker boy began to yearn for the open. The doors were opened, he was told he might go. He put his hands on the old man's knees and said:

"Zap, Ah'm goin' to shoot Robinett dead some day—Ah sho am."

"Sh——" the old man muttered—"don't talk like that Sammy—it's very foolish."

"Zap," the boy continued, "Ah knows whar th' watchman keeps 'is gun nights—sme night ef Ah kin wake up Ah'm agoin' t' sneak in—take 'er out and blow a hole through ol' Robinett's belly—yes'r; right through th' middle of it—Ah sho will!"

The old man set Sammy on a chair and drawing his own close up he talked the idea clear out of the little towsly head.

This made Sammy feel rather important and he said as he left, "All right, Zap, Ah won't shoot th' old sucker—Ah'll let 'im live awhile longer—Ah sho will!"

"How long have you held that relationship to the community, father?"

There was a new tenderness in Ruden's voice.

"Since I lost you," was the answer.

Sammy Kelly had thrown some new light on the old man's character—he had revealed him to his own son in a way that no amount of conversation could have done.

“Father,” Ruden said as he laid his hands on his shoulders and looked appealingly into his face. “I wish you would adopt this cracker boy's philosophy!”

“What is it?”

“Let the suckers live awhile longer!”

The old man put the lid on the infernal machine and stowed it away without comment.

CHAPTER XXIX

“JUST MARA”

ABOUT a week after the departure of Ruden, a poorly clad, homely looking woman rented the end hut in “Shot Gun Row,” and applied for work in the mill. She told a pitiful tale of unfortuitous circumstances and on the strength of it—a rare thing in industry—obtained a place at seventy-five cents a day. She had been at work several days before her next door neighbor, Mrs. Peterson, had a word with her. They met at the hydrant one evening after working hours and Mrs. Peterson instinctively knew that her neighbor had seen better days. There was no indication of it on her face; it looked wrinkled and homely enough, but when she stepped aside and urged Mrs. Peterson to draw her water first, Mrs. Peterson knew by the tone of the voice and by the unselfish courtesy,—a rare enough thing around an Arden water hydrant—that she had dropped quite a distance. She was confirmed in her estimate when the stranger invited her into her hut for a chat about mill matters. There was very little furniture, but the pictures on the board walls were unlike anything in Arden. Mrs. Peterson could not have told why—she just knew. They were few, but choice. They were not even framed, but they looked much better than any in the village. Then the stranger had betrayed herself by a sign unmistakable. She used a tooth brush! A burning curiosity seized Mrs. Peterson. Her neighbor had a past. She was sure of that and wanted to know at least a lit-

tle of it. Mrs. Peterson's girl Willalee, a girl of nine, worked in the mill. Mill children, like poets, are born, not made. Willalee had been in the mill since she was a thought in the mind of her parents. Amid the roar and thunder of ten thousand spindles, she developed in her mother's womb, and her mother worked there until within twenty-four hours of the child's birth. It was as natural, therefore, for Willalee to clutch for the whirling threads with baby fingers as it is for ducks to swim. At four, five, and six she played amongst the dancing bobbins, and at eight was a full-fledged pay envelope hand. It was through Willalee that Mrs. Peterson hoped to know more of the stranger's past. She instructed the child to watch for her neighbor after work and walk home with her. She listened for the opening of the door in the early morning and whether it was to get water from the hydrant or the departure to work, Willalee was on hand.

“We uns want t' know yer name,” the child said one morning, as they walked together through the darkness to the mill.

“Call me Mara,” was the answer.

“Mara what?”

“Just Mara.”

So throughout the mill and the mill village the stranger was known as “Just Mara.”

It was whispered around that “Just Mara” must have been a lady at some previous period of her life, and the whisperings created a respect that no other woman in the mill enjoyed, and the only man that enjoyed it—if it could be classed as an enjoyment—was Zap. It was natural, therefore, that these people should be catalogued together in the mind of the community otherwise so utterly devoid of mystery or romance.

It was Willalee who told "Just Mara" of Zap, and it was Sammy Kelly who told Zap of "the woman with the nice voice." Each story was told with considerable exaggeration, but behind the childish persiflage could be discerned personality enough to excite interest and curiosity.

"Just Mara" and Zap met at the hydrant one Sunday afternoon, and before they carried away their pails of water, each of them knew that a valuable acquaintance had been made. Indeed they forgot for at least half an hour that they were standing by the hydrant at all, so interested were they in each other. That evening they took tea together, and Nell was there. The second meeting was at Nell's house. The calls and conferences were almost nightly after that, and to each they were like palm groves in the Sahara. About two weeks after the meeting of Zap and "Just Mara" at the hydrant, there was a meeting in Nell's cottage. They had discussed the mill and its people; the village and its problems until there seemed little more on that topic to say. Each of them longed for a more personal acquaintance, but no one seemed anxious to open the gates of the past.

Nell was the most reticent and the less curious of the three.

"You have missed a line," Zap said to "Just Mara" in a jocular vein. "Just Mara" understood and winced not nor tried to hedge the hint.

"Where?" she asked.

"On your right cheek, there is one less than usual." She laughed and said, "You have suspected my make-up for some time, haven't you?"

"I knew it and disapproved from the start—the day I met you at the hydrant."

“It was my protection.”

“It was a good disguise, but no protection.”

“I will not need it any longer—I have learned all I wanted to know—but I would like to do something before I leave!”

“The best you could do would be but as a drop in a bucket.”

“I know, but there’s some sort of satisfaction in the explosion of pent-up feelings!”

“How would you like to explode?” Zap asked.

“I would like to have a meeting in the schoolhouse and tell the people some of the thoughts that came to me while in the mill.”

“If that would give you any satisfaction, I can arrange the meeting, but tell me, good friend, what awakened you,—what sort of dynamic opened your eyes?”

For answer she sighed and said evasively, “My God! what a world of sin!”

“Make it ‘sinners,’ and we will agree with you,” Nell said.

“Well,” Zap said, “I’ll get you an audience anyway, and you can unburden yourself and leave at peace.”

“O my friend,” she said piteously, “I would sit at your feet—I would learn of you, for my soul is so rent—so storm tossed. I’ve been such a miserable cynic all my life—I want faith—faith in God, faith in humanity, and faith in myself!”

The old man was moved almost to tears—not so much by what she said as by the picture of misery she presented, as she gave vent to her heart cry.

“Rather would I learn of you,” Zap said, “for like Madam Roland, I am pious when my heart is troubled, and when my heart is at peace my mind wings its flight. I would fain believe and yet must doubt.”

"I have tried to act," she said, "as if faith were true, and by degrees I am finding that faith is truth. While my reason is asking a multitude of questions, my heart is at peace in God." Then, as if forgetful of their presenee, she said, looking in the direction of a little shrine she had arranged in a corner, "Oh, that I could go back—Oh, that I could recall the years!"

"Suppose you recall your speech for the people and let the past go for a night?"

"Speech! You scare me, Mr. Zap! I have no speech—I'm going to recall my emotions—my disgust—my—"

"Wait a moment—they have enough disgust of their own, good friend; don't, don't, I pray you, surfeit them with what they are already cursed with—show them a way out—give them a program if you have one!"

The schoolroom was large and unlovely. The walls were bare—the floor was unswept. It was a queer crowd that gathered there. Nobody knew just what they were there for. It was a "meetin',"—that was enough. Children came for the sake of an extra hour out of bed. Old folks came in the hope of amusement. The young folks came to see each other. It was a change—a break in the monotony.

Zap introduced the speaker. "We have here a fellow worker," he said, "who has seen better days. She wants to talk to us about our life here. Since she lives and works with us we are glad to sit beside her for an hour and hear what she has to say." Zap knew the situation—he made it easy for Mara to speak. Robinett stood by the door. He was evidently displeased. He cuffed several of the wriggling youngsters and swore at the parents, who permitted them to come. Mara remonstrated with him in a gentle manner from her seat beside Zap on the platform.

“Go on,” he shouted, “shoot off yer mouth and let these kids get to bed.”

“I had an opportunity a few weeks ago to own a mill like this one,” she began, “but the price was too high.—What do you think I was asked to give in exchange for it?”

There was an impressive silence—created not merely by the words, but by the sound. It was a sound seldom heard in those parts. It contrasted strangely with the make up of the speaker. It was a voice that had known sorrow and carried now a soothing sympathy to the hearts of the hearers. “The price was my soul!” she continued. “I refused to sell, and came here to find out what kind of a bargain I missed.” Zap turned around in his seat and riveted his eyes on the speaker. The women stretched their necks forward in strained attention. Mara saw her opportunity and pushed in one after another the most important things she had to say. Her advice was the baldest that washed-out audience had ever heard. “Every child born in this district,” she said, “is the making of a white slave—under the conditions imposed upon us here it’s a crime to bring children into the world. We mill folks are called ‘white trash’—we are despised by both white and black people—we are damned into the world—damned while in it, and die without ever having lived! Life to us is on a lower level than that of the horse. As I have gone to my hut night after night with blistered hands, aching body, and bleeding heart I have been so filled with hatred that I could blow that accursed bastille of the poor into the air!”

“Better weigh yer words,” shouted Robinett, as he glared at her from the door.

“I have weighed them,” Mara answered, “and if I

were a man I would see that you weighed yours a little more carefully than you do!"

Without a word in reply, the "whipper in" stepped to the middle of the room, pulled down the big oil lamp, and deliberately blew it out.

There was a shout and a rush to the door.

Women and children knocked each other down and fought for room to escape. Children screamed in terror as they clutched viciously at anything within reach. It was but the work of a minute to clear the house—Zap and Mara were last to leave. Many were hurt, but none of them seriously. Robinett laughed and joked over the plight of the people. "Git a move on now!" he said to those who lingered to voice their grievances. They moved slowly. Some stood still and were rudely pushed and threatened with the night stick. The children dispersed more quickly. They knew how he kept such threats. Mara and Zap moved slowly home to Shot Gun Row. In less than an hour afterwards the village had quieted down, the lights were out and the mill hands were asleep.

Five hours later they were startled into life with a shock that shook the distant city. It was a muffled, deafening roar accompanied by vibrations so violent that scores were shaken out of their beds. Every soul fit to move rushed out into the darkness, and looked instantly toward the mill. It was no longer there. A huge heap of crumbled ruins occupied the site and from their midst shot up a tongue of flame against the stars. In a minute the community, in scant attire, stood watching the flames. One man was alert, busy, excited,—it was Robinett. He went in search of the night watchman—Mose Streeter. Mose knew nothing of the origin of the catastrophe, but expressed himself as being grateful

that he was out of the building when the explosion took place. Robinett knocked him flat on his back for his gratitude and ignorance.

By the time Mose had picked himself up, Robinett was putting Zap through a third degree examination. That finished, he went to Mara's hut and put her under arrest.

The jail was a small, square, windowless structure, locally known as the “sweat box.” Into this the “whipper in” rudely pushed Mara and locked the door. A hurried conference between Robinett and Parsons, the superintendent, resulted in the arrest and incarceration of Zapolya.

By daylight a number of detectives and police officials of Anniston were on the ground.

The mill had been destroyed by dynamite,—no one doubted that,—but by whom and for what reason, no one ventured to guess,—no one but Robinett.

One of the minor local stockholders was on hand early and took charge of the investigation. Robinett was the special policeman at the mill, and when every clue had been followed and exhausted he took the official to one side and explained the schoolhouse meeting in detail. “Hand them right over to the city police!” he said when Robinett told of Mara's language and Zap's relations with her.

That practically ended the investigation. Zapolya and “Just Mara” were hand-cuffed and taken away that forenoon. A crowd of mill people hung around the “sweat box,” hoping for a glimpse of the two people they had loved, but who since they had incurred suspicion and were in the grip of the law, seemed different—different because to the poor a charge always is equivalent to guilt.

The Anniston papers printed in large black headlines: "Arden cotton mill destroyed by Socialists!" The Governor issued orders that the trial be pushed with all possible despatch. There was no distinct order to that effect, merely a suggestion over the 'phone. The accused asked for no legal advice, made no protest against what seemed undue haste in the proceedings, and the result was that the trial was set for a date which under ordinary circumstances would not have given time enough to empanel a jury.

The feeling engendered against the prisoners by the newspapers grew intense and bitter. There wasn't a juryman of the twelve qualified to sit on the case. They had all made up their minds.

The attorney for the defense, appointed by the Court, permitted the selection to proceed without challenge. On the day when the trial began the court room was filled to its capacity, with a crowd of abnormal citizens to whom a tragedy is as recreative as a circus.

The first witness put on the stand was Robinett, the "whipper in." In the midst of his testimony there was a stir in the rear of the court room—officers gave orders and men pushed each other aside in their eagerness to catch the new sensation. It was the Hon. John Whitteley, Governor of the State! A Court officer conducted him to a seat beside the presiding Judge. All eyes were fixed on the chief magistrate, and he looked as if he knew it. When settled in his seat, his eyes wandered around the Court room in search of the prisoners. The eyes of the crowd watched and followed him. Finally the gaze of the Governor rested on Mara. She met it with a look full of scorn. There was a hurried conference with the Judge—a consultation with the lawyers, and a statement by the prosecution.

“If your Honor please,” said the district attorney, “it has just come to our knowledge that the female prisoner at the bar is in no way connected with the crime, and we recommend her immediate discharge!”

“Stand up!” said the Judge, in a patronizing tone. Nobody moved. “Stand up!” he again ordered. The Court officer took Mara rudely by the arm and would have raised her to her feet. She shook herself loose. “Is he talking to me?” she asked.

“Shure!” growled the officer.

“If, then, he has no respect for a lady, let him respect his office and address me as a gentleman should!” The court room was electrified. The officials gasped open-mouthed and the crackers craned their necks to catch the slightest sound. The intense silence that followed was soon broken by a hundred low exclamations of astonishment. The Governor and the Judge had their heads close together for a minute. The district attorney went over to Mara and politely asked her to stand while the Judge discharged her. Before he succeeded, however, the Judge amended his manners and got Mara on her feet. He informed her amid a silence that might have been created by the delivery of a sentence of death that the owners of the mill desired her discharge because of lack of evidence.

“I desire to ask the Court a question,” Mara said.

“Very well,” was the Court’s reply, “what is it?”

“Has the prosecution evidence on which to hold the *male* prisoner?”

“Yes, it has!” yelled the district attorney, before the Court could answer. Mara stood still. There was another conference, as a result of which the Judge informed Mara that the evidence against the fellow prisoner was of a serious nature and would be considered.

“Then,” said Mara deliberately, “the *female* prisoner, as the district attorney styles her, refuses to be discharged. I demand to be tried!”

There was no official reply to the demand. Mara was ordered to sit down and the trial proceeded. Half a dozen witnesses were examined during the afternoon. When Court convened next morning, it was announced that the people’s ease in the destruction of the mill had failed, and the prisoners were discharged.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CAFÉ COSMOPOLITE

A WEEK after their discharge Mara and Zap sat opposite each other in a quiet corner of the Café Cosmopolite, a well known East Side Hungarian restaurant in New York. It was foreign soil to Mara, Zap was at home. A stringed orchestra rendered at intervals the music of his far off mountain home. The waiters took orders in the language of the Magyars.

"This," said the old man, "is a little bit of my native land; it is so peaceful to me after the years of sorrow and unrest."

"I wish I could find such a palm grove," Mara said, "but I must find mine in the land of the mind."

"That's higher and better," he said.

A strong attachment had sprung up between these people so strangely thrown together. They had separated at the Anniston Court House door and met again by appointment at this other door, in Bohemia. The appointment was of the woman's making. She contemplated a revolutionary change in her life and felt confident that the old man could give her the wisdom she thought she stood so much in need of.

"Do you believe in metempsychosis?" he said.

"Why?"

"I never gave it much attention until I met you."

"My antiquity suggested two lives in one—was that it?"

"Not that exactly," she said smiling, "I imagined I had seen you in another life."

"That is possible without the transmigration of souls."

"How?"

"I have two sons."

"Tell me about them."

"I have only seen one—"

"Ah, yes, I remember," she said, "you told me—" He completed the interrupted sentence—"I have only seen one of them since they were children, and I saw him but for a few days."

"At what age?"

"In his maturity—quite recently."

A strain of music took the old man's mind away from his immediate environment. A weird touch with tears in it. Mara watched his face as it wept and smiled with the violin. It was the face of a poet. There was a flash of soul fire through the eyes—a lighting up of the countenance, an occasional tossing to one side of the massive head of the big shock of white hair that hung over the fine forehead. Mara was comparing his face with the faces she knew best. The music died down. There was applause by the diners and Zap was recalled to his companion.

"You are fond of music," she said.

"Not particularly," he answered. "I am fond of life and I am attracted by its best interpreters. The piece we have just listened to is by a wild free soul of the Transylvania mountains. He nerves men to endeavor, generates the martyr spirit and spiritualizes life's lower levels."

"That's a good definition of religion," Mara suggested.

"It is religion!" he replied.

"Have you always struck the positive note?" she asked.

"You saw my bomb?"

"Yes."

"Was that a positive note?"

"I should say not!"

"Well, that was the note I struck until I found my son—he has been ground between the upper and nether millstones of the *status quo*, but he is scientific, he has a lively hope and a philosophy of life that shamed me in my old age."

"Did it shame you out of your grouch?"

"Yes," he said as if analyzing her question, "and he did more, he gave me a philosophy of life."

"Ah!" she ejaculated—"I wish he would give me one—that's what I want with you—I want you to bring order out of chaos—give me a plan."

"Are you ready for it?"

"I think so."

"Then you will submit it to your husband for approval?"

"I have no husband—I—I did have one, but I gave him up—I gave him up because he was the very incarnation of what I am now seeking."

"Why don't you go to him?"

"I cannot—I am ashamed, beside I think he loves another."

"Have you children?"

"Yes, three, and I cannot see them until I am grounded in my new hope, my new religion."

Zap had ordered a Goulash arranged to suit one not acquainted with the Hungarian dish. When it arrived Mara joked and laughed over it. It was both a meal

and a joke to both of them. Music accompanied the meal, this time it was a militant strain. They could hear the horses prancing on parade, then the measured tread followed by a confusion of noises, cannon and musketry. In a calm could be heard the groaning of the wounded and then the weeping of women and little children. Every man and woman in the Café was nerve strung to a high degree. Intense silence reigned. There was neither eating nor drinking until the last low sound had died away—then tumultuous applause—and cries of "Encore!"

"This isn't quite the place for a quiet talk," Mara said as the musicians dispersed for the recess.

"True enough," he said, "but people don't come here to be quiet. They come here to get relief for an hour from the grind, from the monotony."

Mara took full advantage of the recess to unburden herself. The necessity of earning a living was weighing heavily upon her mind, and she made the subject a first order of business. Then she discussed the regimentation of the idea that now dominated her life. In describing her feelings on the matter she described also the ideas of her friend. He, too, had come to believe that reform ideas must be mobilized to effect results. As they talked they noticed the man who waited upon them move uneasily around. He was looking them over with an unusual interest.

Zap ordered an extra cup of coffee.

"Did you notice that waiter?" Mara asked.

"Yes, he's a propagandist."

"I had a talk with him yesterday."

When the man returned with the coffee Zap addressed him in Hungarian. For reply the man produced a red card.

"I thought so," Zap said, smiling.

The men talked for a few minutes in their native tongue.

"He tells me there's a meeting to-morrow night at Aurora Hall. He presides and would like you to be one of the speakers."

"Did you tell him of the success of my last venture?" Mara asked, smiling.

"I told him you were aching for another opportunity."

"Well, I'm not quite aching to make a fool of myself again, but I'll speak if there's an opportunity."

"You know what that involves, I suppose."

"My address?"

"No, not your address, but your initiation into the party."

"I am prepared for that."

"I doubt your preparedness. The party is now in the hands of about as incompetent a group of men as ever dominated a political movement—garrulous, hateful, dictatorial and dogmatic. You will be received as a sheep would among goats. You will be pitied and patronized by men who are more in need of a bath than a commonwealth."

Mara smiled and then tears filled her eyes.

"You were not listening," he said.

"I was," she answered, "but I was also reminiscent—I have used all those objections—with phrases like those I have browbeaten one of the noblest human souls that ever loved his kind—they are meaningless to me now, it's the truth that counts. The priests of the new order are hewers of wood and drawers of water, but they bring us a religion that will free the world!"

"Your husband?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes," she said with trembling lips, "the man I bartered away for a round of pleasure with the inane Bourgeoisie."

"What will you talk about to-morrow night?" he asked in an effort to change a disagreeable subject.

"The terms of the sale!" she replied at once.

The waiter began to clear the table. While he was doing so he unostentatiously laid a card before Mara containing full directions how to reach the place of meeting.

"This reminds one of French history," Mara said, "is there any reason for such *silent* propaganda?"

"None, but long experience teaches men of this type to approach strangers cautiously and quietly—I prepared the way by telling him about you last night."

Again the music stilled the hum of voices. Under its influence people's eyes wandered around the place in search of a resting place. The minds wandered not after the eyes, but back over the years or out into the unknown future.

"What a poetic people you Magyars are!" Mara said, as she looked around and noticed the rapt attention under the spell of the music.

"Poetry is not a matter of race," he said. "The whole human family is naturally poetic, artistic and æsthetic, but in millions these manifestations of the quest after God are murdered. They come up out of the pit at the close of the day, eat, rest and sleep, and go back into it at dawn. They are not here. Those around these tables are the escaped."

"Partially escaped," Mara said, "for how can any of us be said to have escaped while so many are still in captivity?"

"Well, discuss that in your speech to-morrow night."

“If I should miss you by any chance after the meeting, my son and I will call for you Saturday evening at six.”

Twenty minutes later they parted at the door of Mara's hotel on Washington Square.

As the old man walked slowly back to his lodging on East Houston Street he went over in his mind the brief space of his acquaintance with this strange woman of whom he knew so little and yet so much. He had not even asked for her name. He knew nothing of her antecedents save an occasional reference to a relative or to a former state of mind. A revolution had taken place in her heart as well as in her mind. Every time he looked at her he thought of his son. He hoped that they would form a comradeship of a more than ordinary kind. They were both touched with the same tender regard for the weak. They were obsessed with the same social passion and point of view. He longed for Saturday night.

CHAPTER XXXI

A DEDICATION IN THE GHETTO

THE soul of the Ghetto is religious, but not ecclesiastical. It is political, but has nothing in common with the dominant parties. It is social, but in eternal conflict with the outgrown and useless institutions. In the midst of religious lethargy and political graft and corruption it proclaims its faith in a coming day of peace. It has no race distinctions. Men of all races, all classes, and all creeds are of it. It is not confined to political campaigns or elections. It takes no recess—no vacation. It wields a keen-edged sword, but it carries also a builder's trowel. Its propaganda is a new religion. Its propagandists are the martyr stuff of the twentieth century. They are of the working class largely, and consequently limited in the literary expression of the social passion that burns in them like a lambent flame.

Aurora Hall is in the heart of the Ghetto. Zap and Mara found it crowded to overflowing when they arrived. They arrived within ten minutes of each other, and were shown to seats on opposite sides of the platform. It was a protest meeting, and although the center of grievance was at the other end of the continent, it was felt as poignantly by the soul of the Ghetto as by the laborers who had been ambushed by process of law.

The waiter of the Café Cosmopolite was introduced as the chairman of the meeting. In his three-minute speech he spoke in three languages. The first speaker of the evening was Fred Hartzell, a popular agitator of

the East Side. The audience was composed largely of men—men with keen upturned intellectual faces. The speech was a torrent of words that swept over their souls and swayed them as a breeze sweeps over the ripe rye of the field. He spoke with his body as well as with his tongue. He tossed his massive head back and roared. At times the sounds were harsh and tinged with sarcasm; at other times they became lower and as tender as the lullaby of a refined mother. He outlined the grievances of the western comrades, and made a plea for solidarity, for funds and for a public expression of disapproval. It was a violent and explosive expression on the whole and in sharp contrast to the speaker who followed him.

“By a strange coincidence,” said the chairman, “we have two speakers to-night who have had some personal experience in the muscle market, the ethics of which we are discussing. I now introduce to you Attorney Ethel Ainsworth!”

It was Miss Ainsworth's first appearance before an audience composed chiefly of propagandists—she removed her hat as she mounted the platform. She was neatly gowned and her face was radiant. Fresh from the scenes of labor's martyrdom she was full of her subject. The introduction was awkward, but as she steadied herself mentally and physically she gave an orderly arrangement of experiences in the labor camps of the South, and of her part in the now celebrated trial of Llwelllyn Oglethorpe for Peonage. When she concluded the applause was tremendous and prolonged. It was prolonged until she arose in her seat and bowed her acknowledgments. The second round of applause had scarcely died away when the next speaker was introduced. The chairman consulted his notes, then stepped

to the side of old Zap, and after a moment's inquiry returned.

"The next speaker," he said, "has also been at the front. I hope her experience has been as unique as her name—I take pleasure in introducing to you Mrs. Just Mara of New York."

Mara was pale and haggard, but she had nerved herself for the effort. Her jacket and hat she laid on the table. In her seat she had planned just how she could get a steadying grip on the little table on the platform. As she laid her things on it she pulled it over in front of her and took the edge of it in her right hand. All this was done too quickly to be noticed by the audience, but there were three people who gazed loose-jawed at her from the moment she ascended the platform.

"I am not going to try to make a speech," she said, "physically I am unable. Besides, the previous speaker has gone over the ground I wished to travel."

There was a pause. Instinctively every man and woman in the place saw a soul struggle in her face. Her lips trembled. She took a tighter hold of the table, and by a supreme effort pushed back the latent tears—cleared her throat and said: "I will, however, make a personal confession." It was not the mere wording of what she said that electrified the audience. In a minute she had created an atmosphere in which men and women were forced to open wide the ear gates to their souls. There were tears in her words and the poorly modulated sounds were those of a soul in pain.

"I fought for years the truth for which you stand. I was bitter and embittered the lives of others. I loved what we call society. I thirsted for the recognition of the vulgar rich. I got it. The price was high—very high." She paused, the stillness seemed breathless,

"It cost me my home, my husband and almost my soul!" A longer pause and a fiercer struggle, then she continued: "On the edge of the abyss, I found myself. It was a rude awakening, but I was saved from the sleep of death. I have emerged from the mausoleum of dead hopes, of negation, of casuistry and selfishness, and on this platform and in the midst of my comrades I dedicate myself to the cause of the people!" As she approached the end of the sentence she gained in confidence, she stood erect, her eyes flashed and the color came to her cheeks. The audience didn't let her quite finish the sentence; it broke into loud applause—at first of hand clapping—then it broke into a cheer—and the cheer had fire and passion in it. While they were cheering Mara turned and whispered to the chairman. He immediately arose, and as the cheering subsided, called for an application blank. A man arose, walked to the platform, and handed the blank to Mara. She signed it and the man countersigned it. The chairman took it out of her hand and read to a breathless audience:

"MADELINE RUDEN

PROPOSED BY

STEPHEN RUDEN OF LOCAL

NEW YORK."

In a flash the situation was made clear. The audience again broke into a cheer, and so wild was the outburst that the chairman was unable again to restore order. Hundreds crowded to the front and grabbed the Rudens by the hands. Husband and wife were in tears—Zap kissed them both as he, too, wept like a child. Ethel Ainsworth pushed her way through the crowd and put

her arms around Mrs. Ruden's neck. They kissed each other without a word, but with looks more eloquent than speech.

After the meeting the Rudens, Zap and Miss Ainsworth went to the old man's lodging.

CHAPTER XXXII

A MIDNIGHT CONFERENCE

NEITHER Madeline nor Ethel Ainsworth were as yet aware of the relation of the ex-minister to the old man. When the fact was made known Madeline was filled with joy. She kissed the old man over and over again. She wept as she caressed him. Ethel sat at a distance in a meditative mood thinking of deeper things. Stephen Ruden was silent. It was the crucial moment of his life. A great problem was before him. He knew not where to begin, but begin he must—somewhere. The old man was almost childish in his glee. His heart was overflowing with love. They had all divested themselves of their hats and outside wrappings and seated themselves as comfortably as the scant accommodation of the dingy room afforded. The old man drew his chair close to Ethel.

“You seem to have the smallest measure in this feast,” he said, smiling through his tears.

“I’ll take the crumbs that fall from the table,” she answered.

Madeline took advantage of the old man’s attention to Ethel and went over to her husband. He sat on the edge of the bed. She seated herself beside him.

“Can’t we settle all this to-night, Stephen?” she asked.

“All what, Madeline?”

She looked at him for a moment.

“Stephen,” she said, “it is the crisis of your life—not

mine. Let us have no fencing—no beating about the bush, let us go to the heart of the subject and straighten it out.”

“Why isn’t it the crisis of your life, as well as mine?”

“My crisis is past. I am no longer your wife, I want to see you happy—I *shall* see you happy!”

The inflection in Madeline’s voice attracted Ethel’s attention. She looked over Zap’s shoulder. As she did so she met the gaze of the Rudens, both of whom thought of her at the mention of the word “happy.”

Ethel arose hastily. She evidently divined the matter under discussion and left Zap without apology so wholly engrossed was she with the problem of which she considered herself a vital part.

“Look here,” she said, laying a hand on Madeline’s shoulder, “pardon me for interrupting you, but I want to be a gateway through which you people will walk to happiness and freedom.”

“Pardon me—” Madeline broke in, but Ethel interrupted her—“just a moment, Madeline.”

“What’s all this serious discussion about on such a night of joy?” Zap asked as he followed Ethel. They looked at him for an instant in silence.

Stephen Ruden spoke. “Father,” he said, “we have here a problem that will rend the very souls of three of us—help us out!”

The seats were rearranged and the four people re-seated themselves and looked at each other. Ruden and Miss Ainsworth spoke at once. The latter would not be diverted.

“There is really no problem,” she said. “I am an invader—I must—I demand to be eliminated!”

“Well, at least,” Ruden said, “We must not play

with words or deceive ourselves or each other—there is a problem, Ethel, as vital as life and as grave as death.”

The old man eagerly scanned their faces. The dim yellow gas light revealed them imperfectly, and the mellowness of his heart militated against the sharpness of his judgment. He sensed the delicacy of the situation, however, and suggested a plan by which they could get at the heart of the matter with the least amount of embarrassment to the people involved.

“If it’s as serious as all that,” the old man said, “why not state the case and let me judge?”

“I am afraid I should ask for a transfer of jurisdiction,” Ethel said.

“Why?”

“Prejudice.”

“Oh, Ethel!” Ruden exclaimed.

“Oh, Stephen!” she replied. “I am joking—trying to keep back a fit of hysteria or something.”

Madeline went over and kissed her, then resumed her seat.

“Then you are agreed that I hear the case and deliver judgment?”

“Personally,” Ethel interjected again, “my objection is on the ground that my testimony is immaterial and irrelevant.”

“In that case,” Zap said, “it’s a matter of weighing the evidence rather than counting the witnesses.”

“This is the case in a nutshell,” Madeline began. “As I told the audience I fought Stephen and his ideals for years. I made life a burden for him and finally gave him up. I positively went after pleasure—my own personal pleasure. In his loneliness came his young convert, Ethel. He inspired her into a large field of life on high levels, of service to her kind. She came to him

at the darkest period of his life, when wife, friends, home, profession, everything fell from him and left him like a leper, despised and rejected of men! Their friendship ripened into love. In different capacities of social service they both went South. He suffered the torments of hell, while I was bartering away my soul—" she hesitated, her emotions almost overcame her, her lips trembled. "Zap," she said falteringly, "I saw him in convict stripes, I heard his tender voice soothing and comforting the men around him. I knew he was a convict for a principle, I knew he was in a modern Gethsemane, and I deliberately turned my back upon him. Ethel loved him best when the world despised him most. Now that I am groping after the higher law shall I degrade myself still further by substituting flesh for spirit, a legal fiction for an eternal law of the soul?"

"Just a moment, Mara," the father interrupted—"there are three children involved, they cannot plead for themselves—"

"I know," she broke in, "that is the usual sentimental plea, but I don't think children would honor a father, who lived a lie to satisfy a false standard of life. We are not cattle to be herded for the convenience of a decadent public!"

"Of course," the father broke in again, "if you have ceased to love Stephen—"

"Stop!" she answered. "I love him as I never loved him before, I love him with my soul, my mind, my love burns like a flame for him, I love him because he is what he is, not because of what he could be to me. I love him too well to stand in his way. I want to clear away the impedimenta that has blocked his way, stunted his growth and broken his heart!"

That was as far as she could go with words. She sobbed the rest, and every sob was a wrench not only at her own heart, but at the hearts of all. They were thrilled with her passionate earnestness and unalterable position. Each of the others knew that whatever they said would be tame compared to the fire of her appeal. Her sobs at first precluded any further discussion. Ethel Ainsworth moved her seat beside Madeline and sat with her arm around her shoulder. As the convulsive sobs subsided she said:

"We must bare our souls to the truth. Nothing must stand between, nothing must intervene. I never told Stephen Ruden that I loved him, but he knows I do. He never told me that he loved me, but I know he does. Now, if we three and the three children were the only ones concerned, the matter of readjustment would be simple. We could even defy public opinion, but there's something bigger than all these combined, something Madeline has forgotten, something she is as devoted to as I am, as her husband is."

"What's that?" Madeline asked impatiently.

"The cause of the people!"

"I don't see how the cause of the people would suffer by a man living his own life."

"I think you will if you reflect a moment. A Christian may commit rape, arson or murder without a hint that the act is even remotely connected with Christianity. A Republican may be an atheist or a notorious grafter without his specialty being charged to his party, but the moment a Socialist deviates a hair's breadth from either good laws or bad ones, custom, tradition, or superstition the deviation is forthwith charged to Socialism. Now, Socialism is a body of truth. We are the custodians of it. We come and go, we are tran-

sients, the movement is eternal. We are big as we make it big, insignificant as we lessen its power, or impede its progress."

Miss Ainsworth grew calmer as she proceeded. As she spoke the face of Stephen Ruden grew pale. He looked like a man who had gone through a great siege of illness. A new agony was on his heart. He had sat by the deathbed of many a hope, many an aspiration, but none that seemed to take the ground from beneath his feet as this one. He had never felt quite so human. He would have been willing to confess that. This new inquisition was more poignant than all that preceded it. It was like tearing his heart out by the roots. These two women might talk all night, but he knew that he must say the final word. Vainly he listened for a word that would minister to his human life, the human side of him that had been so starved, but the word came not. He had two pathways before him. He could not travel in both at the same time, and he must choose one of them now. In the conflict the idealist diminished, the human man grew large. It was hardly to be expected that in such a battle of cross purposes he would say the right thing at the right time, or even say the right thing at all.

"Besides," he said, as Miss Ainsworth made a momentary halt, "whatever *we* may think of the higher law, or however we may act in conformity with it, Madeline has said nothing that would stand in a court of law."

The words hit both women in the same way. They were both stunned for a moment. Madeline crossed the room, took a hand bag from beneath her jacket, opened and took from it a bundle of letters compactly arranged.

"The letter of my marriage vow I have never vio-

lated," she said, as she handed him the bundle, "but the spirit of it I have broken a thousand times. As courts do not deal with spiritual matters I have here legal evidence that will make you free."

He held the bundle in his hand for a moment in silence. By a movement as quick as thought Miss Ainsworth snatched the bundle from his grasp and stuffed it into the stove at the end of the room. As she closed the stove door she turned her back to it as if to stand guard over the burning.

Stephen Ruden looked at her. "I wish you had given me a chance to recover from my weakness," he said, "but maybe it is just as well."

"It is getting late," the old man said, looking at his son.

"Yes," Stephen said, "we can't stay here all night, but we must talk it out. Madeline speaks of making me free."

"Don't argue, Stephen," Madeline broke in, "there is no time and we do not need it. You know what I mean, I am fighting for you now."

"I know, dear, but you must fight fair, fair to yourself, fair to the children, fair to the movement to which we have dedicated our lives."

"And fair, just for a change, to you!" she added.

"Well, here are three of us," Ruden said, "obsessed with that most powerful of all passions—love. I know of no law of God or man to prevent me loving what and whomsoever I please. Love is imperative, it overrides all reason, sweeps aside all obstacles. It lifts man's soul out of the sordid depths and places it beside God. It partakes of the essence of deity. It relates man to the stars, to flowers and to angels. Now I can take a divine thing like that and let it transform me into a

fiend! Or I can so let it transfuse my being, touch my speech, wing my words that the thing I stand for will be lifted to whatever height I ascend! I have to choose, I must choose *now*. It is one thing to love, it is another thing to express that love. The time may come when society will give love larger expression in matters of sex, but just now the limitations are well defined. We have had a galaxy of star souls who defied laws and customs, and gave free rein to love, but these men and women never took much interest in the laws which bore down heavily on the backs of the poor. They smashed the *status quo*. I am an evolutionist. I think we must suffer together until we are liberated together. For one man or one woman to defy the world and set up a law for themselves is Anarchy. Socialism moves *en masse!*"

"It's a question then," said the old man, "as to how to move, is it?"

"Of course."

"Then we shall move *en masse*," Ethel said, rising and taking her place beside Madeline.

CHAPTER XXXIII

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS

NEARLY a year after the meeting in the dingy room in New York, Zap sat on the veranda of the old house at Brook Farm. Ruden considered it a stroke of great luck that he was able to secure a legal title to it. The old man had one of the children on his knee. The story he was telling her was interrupted by the entrance, through the little front gate, of a stranger.

“Mr. Ruden is not in,” Zap said in answer to his inquiry.

“My name is Philip Bauerman,” the stranger said.

“Oh, yes,” Zap said, taking him a second time by the hand, “Your name is a household word here.”

“Mr. Ruden and I are good friends,” he said.

“Good, is hardly the word, but it will do for the present.”

“I am anxious to know how things are with Mr. Ruden and Mrs. Ruden—you know what I mean.”

“Yes, yes, I know, of course.” Then he turned to the little girl, “Now, dear,” he said gently, “you will just skip off for a while—won’t you—I want to talk to your father’s friend.”

The child hesitated. She looked appealingly at the old man for a moment, then threw her arms around his neck and wept. “I want to know, too, about Mrs. Ruden,” she sobbed.

“My darling,” he said softly, “I have promised that she is coming, and may be to-morrow!”

"It's more'n a hundred years, since you said she was coming, grandpa."

The old man stroked her hair and wiped away her tears. "I know, dear, it's a long time, but you must run away now, just for a little while and we will talk it over by and by."

When the child disappeared, he began reluctantly to tell the story of the year.

"Despite the firm pronunciamiento of Stephen," he said, "Madeline refused to give in. She went to extremes in her efforts to disgust him and to create public opinion against herself. She forged several small checks, and despite Stephen's efforts to free her, she was sent to the Island for six months; she is there now. Miss Ainsworth is now abroad and will remain there indefinitely."

Just then the child darted through the front gate and was caught up in the arms of her father.

"There comes Stephen," Zap said, "and I will leave the rest to him."

The meeting between Ruden and Bauerman was an affectionate one. They had both been traveling a *Via Dolorosa* unknown to most men. So knit together were they that even Zap seemed an intrusion. Back of every thing they had ever said to each other there remained much to be said—much that merely lacked opportunity to say it.

"We have heard something of your ordeal," Stephen said. "But come over here under the tree and tell us about it."

"I became young Oglethorpe's tutor," Philip began, "and had no difficulty in getting back of every thought in his mind—nothing was hidden. I was best man at the wedding. It pained me to hurt the Governor's

niece, but it was inevitable; sin is not individual, it is social, no man liveth unto himself.

“As the bride came up the center aisle to the strains of the wedding march, I left the groom and joined Celia, my sister. She was as pale as death. Her babe was in her arms. Oglethorpe stood before the altar terror stricken. The preacher was a hireling, but I got him. Two of ‘Lone Star’s’ neighbors—desperate men—were on hand, armed.

“As the music ceased I faced the audience, and in a couple of sentences told the story. ‘Llewellyn Oglethorpe,’ I said, ‘You shall fulfill your promise to my sister now and give your ignoble name to her child or pay the penalty!’

“The silence of death reigned for a moment. The bride, to be, fainted and was carried out. He made a move, but I whispered in a low voice, ‘I will shoot you dead if you make another move.’ The coward bowed his head, accepted the situation, and the minister proceeded.

“After the ceremony I took Celia one way and he went another. Next morning he had departed to parts unknown with the girl he could not make his wife.”

“Then you broke down,” Stephen said, as the youth seemed to end the narrative.

“Yes, so did poor Celia, and we lay at death’s door for months.”

“It was a terrible ordeal, Philip,” Zap ventured with a sigh.

“I wouldn’t do it again,” Philip said. “The young rake was a mere product of the times, a lazy, lecherous character and neither better nor worse than tens of thousands of his kind who live on the blood of the poor.”

"What would you do in a case of this kind?" asked Zap.

"Apply whatever law there is, of course, but we go on eternally considering the grist instead of the mill. Just imagine a group of lecherous parasites like Oglethorpe giving color and tone to a university whose motto is "Lux et Veritas?" The church, the schools, and the university, are the bulwarks of the system—teachers, preachers, and almoners are the hirelings of an unjust order and will remain so until the upheaval comes! Oglethorpe is the sort of thing they produce."

"We will not discuss that until we have gone over things more momentous to us both, Philip."

"Tell me, Stephen, what about Madeline?"

"I want you to go with me to meet her to-morrow. Her sufferings have not only revolutionized her mentally, but they have transfigured her person—Philip, she has the fire in her eyes that men saw in the martyrs at the stake. Her tongue is tipped with fire. She will be a power—a Joan of Arc—in the movement."

"Is she coming home?" Philip inquired.

"I think so, but I am not sure, and I dare not argue with her."

"Why not?"

"I stand in awe before such a spiritual power."

There was a long silence. The men gazed into vacancy.

"What are you thinking of Philip?" Ruden asked.

"I was questioning, as I have done a thousand times before, of our methods and motives of reform."

"You wonder whether the game is worth the candle?"

"Well, is it? We are asking for a more equitable distribution of wealth, but do we expect that future holders of Earth's goods will be different from the

present? We agree that the rich are crass—that their life is vulgar, but what guarantee have we that a redistribution will be accompanied by a higher morality?”

“Philip, you talk like a university professor!”

“Is theft justified because the thief is a slick philanthropist who divides his plunder with the church?”

“No, of course not.”

“What was stolen from your father? Merely part of what he earned in the most brutal labor? No, he was robbed of life and yet with that terrific example in front of you you ask other boys’ fathers for guarantees of morality!”

“Pardon me, Philip, you said the universities produced—if they produce anything—types of minds like young Oglethorpe’s, but are you sure that your method of reasoning is not also a university product? It is a species of casuistry that always leaves a balance to the credit of the rich, the strong, the masters; the church, the university, and the courts have practised that subtle deceit upon the masses of the people for centuries. When a preacher refuses to bend his neck he is thrown out. The same thing happens to a professor who does a little thinking on his own account.

“Now we have taken up the mottos which the Christians have abandoned. ‘Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; if a man shall not work neither shall he eat, and man shall earn bread by the sweat of his own face.’ Philip, we shall make that old Bible live, we will rub it into every statute, every state, every phase of life, and wouldn’t it be funny if some day when the Commonwealth is in full swing we had to turn the militia out to force the Christians to accept its teachings?”

“You see,” broke in the old man, “that Stephen has his new order whittled out to a fine point.”

"You are mistaken, father, I am afraid of the man who knows what the future holds in store. Each age will work out its own problems. Ours has been largely sword, but even now we are finding use for the trowel. We must build up where we tear down, and whatsoever things are true, just, helpful and of good report will stand forever."

Next day in the late afternoon Stephen Ruden and his young friend stood by the edge of the East River in the northern part of New York City. They had been watching a point on the opposite shore, for nearly an hour, when a white boat shot her nose out into the stream.

"Oh!" the men exclaimed in unison.

Then Ruden sighed. Neither of them spoke for fully five minutes. Ruden had a field glass, and was searching the deck of the on-coming steamer. He handed the glass to Philip. Nothing of interest was discerned by either of them. It was a journey of fifteen minutes, but it seemed an hour to the men on watch. The steamer took a sudden turn to port and in a few minutes the deck hands had cast their hawsers and made her fast; then it was that the two men discovered the object of their search.

A motley throng filed silently down the gang plank. There were men ragged, unkempt wastrels, who had taken that trip before. There were women with little shawls wrapped tightly around their heads, and younger women of the *demi monde* class who held their heads defiantly high and on their powdered faces a challenge bore! At the end of the sad procession came Madeline Ruden to meet a different reception.

Stephen caught her in his arms the moment she left the plank. What he said as he held her there is not

for me to repeat, but it was evident that the fight was over.

Arm in arm they came away from the dock where a curious crowd had singled them out for special scrutiny. Their faces were shining with ineffable joy.

"I wish you could share in a larger measure this revival of life," Mrs. Ruden said to Philip.

"I hope to get a little of it by reflection," Philip said.

"How?" Stephen asked.

"Ethel Ainsworth lands to-morrow and we are to spend the evening together!"

The Rudens looked at each other and then at Philip. There was a look on his face that neither volunteered information nor brooked interrogation. It startled him as much to say what he did as it did the Rudens to hear it.

An hour later the Rudens sat closely together, in an express train that carried them rapidly to New Oxford and Brook Farm. Life was just beginning for them. Ahead lay service and the joy of comradeship.

"I saw a beautiful thought flit across your face, dear," Ruden said. "What is it?"

"A quotation that came to me, over there, in the darkness,

"Love took up the harp of life,
And smote on all its chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, that trembling,
Passed in music out of sight.'"





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